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ABSTRACT

The 13 articles in this report fall into four categories: programs for the culturally disadvantaged, teaching composition, curriculum revision, and detailed classroom practices. Mildred A. Dawson outlines compensatory programs used in Sacramento, California, to prevent drop-outs; Lois Grose concentrates on the pattern-practice method of teaching standard speech; and Agnes Snyder recounts two classroom practices that engaged the interest of disadvantaged elementary students. On composition, Carl A. Barth discusses the program being developed at the Northwestern Curriculum Study Center; James F. McCampbell and Bernard J. McCabe study the special composition problems of students needing remedial work or possessing limited academic ability; Fred Swinnerton illustrates the use of paintings for developing a theme topic; and Bruce Hawkinson comments on the value of "tape-grading" compositions. On curriculum revision, Richard Bossone and Eric Nicolet describe how cooperation between teachers and the Board of Education can upgrade teaching; and Dorothy Davidson reports on the development of a course in linguistics for Texas high schools. In the final section, Georgette Hickman describes a method for teaching vocabulary in the junior high school; Rollin Aleshire presents an 11th-grade classroom unit on "John Brown's Body" and Elaine Atkinson outlines the use of newspapers in high school English programs. (This document previously announced as ED 023 681.) (LH)

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CLASSROOM PRACTICES IN TEACHING ENGLISH — 1965-66

A Third Report of the NCTE

Committee to Report Promising Practices

in the Teaching of English

MICHAEL F. SHUGRUE

GEORGE HILLOCKS, JR.

Cochairmen

NATIONAL COUNCIL OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH

CS 200 761

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Introduction

The twelve articles which the Committee to Report Promising Practices in the Teaching of English has chosen to include in this third annual publication represent the best written, most significant reports selected by the committee from more than one hundred manuscripts submitted over the past year. The articles fall naturally into four groups.

In the first group, we have presented three programs designed for the culturally disadvantaged. Mildred A. Dawson effectively outlines the citywide program now underway in Sacramento, California. Lois Grose concentrates on an interesting approach to teaching standard speech habits in Schenley High School in Pittsburgh, an approach which uses the pattern-practice techniques which have been employed so successfully in the foreign languages. Agnes Snyder then presents two practical, successful classroom practices for disadvantaged elementary students.

The second section of our report centers on the topic of composition. Perhaps no area of English has aroused more discussion in the past few years than the composition process. As we have done in each of our previous publications, we again selected one of the Curriculum Study Centers financed by the U. S. Office of Education for special attention. This year, Carl A. Barth, Research Associate at the Northwestern Curriculum Study Center, outlines the program in composition being developed at Northwestern University. His discussion offers hope to elementary and secondary teachers of English that outstanding curriculum units in composition will soon be available. Two articles study the special problems of teaching composition to children who need remedial work or to pupils of limited academic ability. Fred Swinnerton then presents an effective, creative classroom practice for developing the theme topic. The section concludes with Bruce Hawkinson's interesting essay on tape-grading of compositions, a report which complements last year's article on the use of disks for grading compositions.

In the third section we have presented two articles which deal with curriculum revision, with improving the quality of education in a school system and across a state. Such excellent essays as Richard Bossone and Eric Nicolet's description of the attempt to upgrade the teaching of English in Hemet, California, will be especially useful to departmental chairmen and to others who are working to improve the English programs in their schools and school districts.

The final section of the report presents three classroom practices in detail. Georgette Hickman describes a valuable method for teaching vocabulary growth in the junior high school. Rollin Aleshire presents a classroom unit for the eleventh grade on *John Brown's Body*. Elaine Atkinson outlines the use of the newspaper in the high school English program.

We hope that these reports will be of use to the classroom teacher, who may want to try tested and effective approaches to the teaching of English. We hope, further, that the articles will help to stimulate discussion and revision of the English program in individual schools. We hope, too, to acquaint principals and other administrators, school board members, and concerned laymen with samples of the exciting and stimulating teaching of English being carried on around the country.

The committee extends its deep appreciation to the many teachers and supervisors who submitted reports for possible publication. Even though we were unable to publish all of their articles, we profited from their unflagging enthusiasm, their interest, and their affirmation of a growing spirit of cooperation among teachers of English.

MICHAEL F. SHUGRUE
GEORGE HILLOCKS, JR.
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I.

Programs for the Culturally Disadvantaged

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PILOT PROGRAMS IN COMPENSATORY EDUCATION

Sacramento City Unified School District
Sacramento, California

Sacramento, California, is a city with a population of approximately 262,000 people who represent many ethnic groups, the major national cultures, and socioeconomic levels. Located in the Central Valley, Sacramento is the capital city of California.

There are at present a city junior college, four senior high schools, eleven junior high schools, and 55 elementary schools with a school population, kindergarten through grade six, of 49,740 pupils.

For many years school personnel have studied the dropout problem. Educational programs have been improved and many new programs have been initiated in order to reduce the number of dropouts. Continued study of the problem indicated that in order to reduce the number of dropouts a positive approach to the problem should be made very early in the child's school experience.

Committees composed of teachers, administrators, consultants, program specialists, and members of various community agencies studied the problem and the approach that would be most effective in solving the problem in the Sacramento schools. Members of the committees visited other districts with ongoing programs, attended conferences and workshops, and reviewed the literature concerning compensatory education programs.

The consensus of the people involved in studying the needs of Sacramento pupils was that special programs should be started in elementary schools and should eventually extend to the preschool program for culturally different children.

The Initial Pilot Program

In February, 1964, with the approval of the board of education, a pilot program in compensatory education was started in one elementary school. The board allotted $6,000 in additional funds for initiating the program. In this pilot program, emphasis was given to developing reme-

dial reading programs and increasing the number of field trips taken by all pupils in the school and in the special classes.

The Expanded Program

Selecting the Schools for Participation in the Program

While the compensatory education program was being conducted in one school on a pilot basis, studies were made of the pupils in all elementary schools. Ability tests[1] and achievement tests[2] were given to all pupils in third and fifth grades. The resulting scores were combined and listed in rank order. Fifteen schools in which pupils ranked lowest on the combined scores were selected to participate in the compensatory education program.

The seven schools that ranked lowest were selected for participation in an in-school and an extended-day compensatory education program. The pilot school in which the program was already underway was one of the seven schools selected. The next eight schools in rank order were given opportunity to participate in an extended-day program.

Although it was well recognized that the fifteen schools selected were in the lowest socioeconomic areas of the city and with populations with the greatest mobility, these factors were not taken into consideration in the selection of schools. Nor was ethnic distribution in the schools a factor in the selection. However, a study of the ethnic composition of the schools in December, 1964, indicates that a high percentage of pupils in each of the selected schools is from ethnic groups with cultures that are different from those of middle class Caucasians.

The school enrollments and the percentage distribution of ethnic groups in all Sacramento elementary schools and in the fifteen schools selected for participation in compensatory education programs are given in the table that follows.

Planning the Programs

An "Elementary School Action Committee on Compensatory Education" was appointed to plan the programs for compensatory education. The committee is composed of the principals of the seven schools involved in the in-school and extended-day programs, program specialists in curriculum development, and the assistant superintendent in charge of elementary school instruction.

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[1] California Test of Mental Maturity
[2] Metropolitan Achievement Test

Enrollments and the Percentage Distribution of Various Ethnic Groups in All Elementary Schools and in Those Participating in the Compensatory Education Program

School	Enrollment	Percent Caucasian[1]	Percent Caucasian (Mexican)	Percent Negro	Percent Oriental[2]	Percent Other Non-white
All K-6	28,018	68.8	9.5	12.2	8.1	1.4
Schools with Both In-School and Extended-Day Programs						
1	740	13.4	9.7	72.8	1.7	2.4
2	285	16.2	11.9	68.4	1.4	2.1
3	405	8.1	8.8	82.7	0.2	0.2
4	474	24.0	6.1	64.3	1.4	4.2
5	393	15.0	26.9	53.1	1.5	3.5
6	542	34.6	54.6	8.1	2.0	0.7
7	260	57.1	26.5	10.0	0.7	5.7
Schools with Extended-Day Programs Only						
8	549	49.1	14.9	31.3	3.8	0.9
9	537	62.0	19.5	13.7	2.4	2.4
10	534	39.5	27.1	28.2	2.8	2.4
11	563	44.8	26.8	16.5	7.4	4.7
12	306	5.7	42.1	18.3	30.0	3.9
13	245	59.4	25.7	8.1	4.4	2.4
14	541	29.8	29.5	36.0	2.7	2.0
15	441	84.2	4.3	5.4	4.3	1.8

[1]Not including Mexican.
[2]Oriental for this study includes Japanese, Chinese, and Korean.

This committee developed a statement of the overall purpose of the program in the Sacramento schools: "In this rapidly changing world, children come into our schools with widely different cultural patterns. In order to provide equal educational opportunities for children, it is necessary to provide educational experiences that will compensate for cultural differences. This is the purpose of the program in compensatory education."

The general objectives established by the committee are:

1. to place emphasis upon improving each child's image of himself and his attitude toward others, and
2. to develop each child's skills in oral and written expression and reading, with special emphasis on reading.

Factors identified as affecting the general objectives were:

1. teacher attitudes and understandings,
2. teaching methods and techniques,
3. parent attitudes, and
4. pupil attitudes.

Principals, working with the teachers in their schools, made plans for the programs in their own schools. They were free to develop the program that would best suit the needs of the pupils in their own particular school community. Principals of the schools that were to participate in the extended-day program also designed, with the aid of their teachers, the programs that would best suit the needs of the pupils of their schools.

By general agreement it was decided that the extended-day programs should include one or more of the following items:

1. remedial reading,
2. arithmetic improvement,
3. classes for pupils who need generalized help in the communications skills, including reading, writing, spelling, and speaking,
4. library activities, including individual study and research,
5. individual tutoring and supervision of homework.

The board of education approved the plans for the programs and allocated the sum of $100,000 to be used to implement the programs in in-school and extended-day programs.

The In-School and Extended-Day Programs in Seven Schools

One additional teacher was supplied to each of the pilot schools in order to reduce the class size. Another teacher, known as the "Compensatory Education Teacher" was supplied to each school. This teacher in every instance is one who has taught in the school to which she is assigned and is familiar with the school community as well as the children in the school. She serves as a teacher for special groups of children, assists other teachers, and aids in planning programs that are suited to the needs of the community that the school serves.

A "Resource Teacher" has been provided to serve the seven schools. He has taught in one of the schools he serves; he has taught remedial reading, and belongs to an ethnic group different from the Caucasian. He spends four days a week for four weeks in one school, where he serves as a demonstration teacher, assists teachers in developing new techniques, keeps teachers abreast of the research that has been done in other schools, and serves as a resource person for materials, techniques, and methods. The fifth day of each week he visits the schools upon request and gives the assistance requested of him.

The Compensatory Education Teachers and the Resource Teacher meet monthly to evaluate their programs, to share ideas, and to evaluate materials.

Each school is developing its program to suit the needs of its own community. The programs, therefore, are different in many details. In some schools emphasis is upon remediation in reading; in others, it is upon expanding pupils' backgrounds of information and experience; in others, it is upon the development of study skills; and in still others it is upon development of all skills of communication.

One In-School and Extended-Day Program

A. The In-School Program

The programs in the schools are different. However, a brief description of the program in one school will serve to indicate the types of programs, for it encompasses many of the features of the other programs.

The school, located in the downtown area, has a high percentage of transient children who live in crowded quarters in generally unhygienic conditions. Many live in homes in which Spanish is the only language spoken and where family attitudes are not conducive to academic achievement on the part of children. Most of the families have limited possessions; children lack familiarity with books, magazines, and newspapers; they attend school irregularly; they have no place at home to read or to study; and often their parents fear any contact with the schools. The children lack self-confidence; they have attended many schools without having been in any school long enough to develop good study habits.

Emphasis in this school is given to helping individual pupils in the regular classroom. Periods are fifty minutes in length. During any class period the Compensatory Education Teacher takes ten to twelve pupils for special help in reading.

In *Second Grade*, twelve children are given special reading help daily. At the beginning of the year the Compensatory Education Teacher gave one half-hour of additional assistance two days a week in a team teaching situation during mathematics periods. This aid was needed for only a few weeks, so it was then discontinued.

In *Third Grade*, twelve children who have regular reading instruction with their classmates are given extra instruction by the Compensatory Education Teacher in phonics, vocabulary, word recognition, and listening. The children use cooperative story writing and a variety of related experiences during this additional reading period.

In *Fourth Grade*, children from each fourth grade are given special reading instruction two days a week. The reading instruction methods are developed by the Compensatory Education Teacher to meet the specific needs of each group.

In *Fifth* and *Sixth Grades*, children who were achieving below their ability levels are given a variety of reading experiences to stimulate their interest in reading, to improve their attitudes toward school, and are aided in developing good study and work habits. Emphasis is placed upon the development of research projects.

In general, the Compensatory Education Teacher uses a multimedia approach to the teaching of reading.

B. Additional Features

The *School Nurse* spends twice as much time in the school as she did formerly. This enables her to doublecheck the vision of the children who are in need of remedial reading, to meet parents of the children, and to assist them in meeting the health needs of children. She also assists teachers by teaching cleanliness and good grooming to upper grade girls.

The *Visiting Teacher* visits the homes of children who are problems or who have personal problems and confers with teachers and principals to aid them in meeting the needs of such individuals.

The *Work Experience Clerk* assists all teachers by making ditto copies, charting experience charts, checking, filing tests, and making flannel board stories.

The *Parent-Nursery Program* fills a need for those mothers who need help in understanding the needs of preschool children. Children three to five years of age attend with their mothers one morning a week. Mothers and children make field trips such as those older children take. Children listen to stories and are able to handle books and magazines. Mothers participate in some of the activities of children so that they understand what the children are doing. The Parent-Nursery Program in this school is expanding, but transiency is so great that the composition of the group changes constantly.

Children have taken many *field trips*. However, this part of the educational program is conducted by all teachers, not just as a part of the compensatory program.

Other activities that have proved to be highly successful and motivating to pupils is bringing *resource people* and *various programs*, both informational and entertaining, to the school. Among the various activities and programs this year are AAUW Puppet Show stressing dental health; a senior high school choir; a junior high school choir; a speaker for Veterans' Day; and the symphony orchestra demonstration group. Others anticipated in the near future include physical fitness demonstrations, science demonstrations, a speaker from the department

of weights and measures, various Mexican-American groups, and Junior League plays.

C. The Extended-Day Program

Two classrooms have been made available two days a week for after school study hall work. Eight tutors and two teachers give special help to pupils who wish assistance. Attendance is entirely voluntary on the part of the pupils.

Three afternoons a week one of the teachers teaches English to a selected group of Spanish speaking children. This work in oral language skills and reading is designed to supplement the work given during the regular reading period.

Evening classes in English are conducted by the adult education school. It is too soon to evaluate these classes, but the general feeling is that they are successful.

D. New Features Now Being Added

Through the cooperation of the Community Welfare Council, two "Community Volunteers" have been made available to assist teachers in kindergarten and primary grades.

Features of Other Programs, In-School and Extended-Day

One other pilot school is making use of Community Volunteers in primary grades.

One school has recently added the services of an individual who makes visits to the home of the parents in the school community. She is a long-time resident of the school community and is well liked by the other residents. Her specific objectives are to make new residents feel welcome, to acquaint parents with the school's activities, and to encourage all parents to visit the school. She gives specific invitations to a small group of parents to visit classes and to participate in an informal coffee hour with the teacher that was visited. She also informs parents of the opportunities for adult education.

One pilot school conducts the Parent-Nursery program on a five day a week basis. Parents spend one morning a week and the children spend five days a week. Parents must attend the classes for them or the children cannot attend the nursery school.

The Extended-Day Programs

Eight schools, aside from those that participate in the in-school program, participate in the extended-day program. These programs are

also varied to meet the needs of the area served. College and university students, lay people, and teachers provide tutorial services for those children who need assistance or a place to study. In some of the extended-day programs pupils are given experiences in art, music, or science. Some offer additional opportunities for development of oral and written communication skills. In areas where pupils come from homes in which Spanish is the only language, pupils are aided in learning to speak, read, and write English. Some schools offer remedial arithmetic also in the extended-day program.

Evaluation of the Programs

The programs have been of too short duration for the compilation of any statistical evidence concerning their success. Pupils, parents, teachers, and administrators have all stated that the programs are beneficial to pupils and parents. Attitudes of pupils toward learning, toward school, and toward each other seemingly have improved; their behavior indicates better adjustment to the school; and attendance has improved. Parents who have had little identification with their children's education have begun to be more interested and involved. In at least one instance a mother has been motivated to attend adult classes in order to learn basic elementary skills. Several children who were in remedial classes at the beginning of the school year have now returned to their regular classes as successful members of the group. As an indication of the popularity and the success of the extended-day program, principals report voluntary pupil participation in the programs ranging from 27.8 percent to 65.1 percent of all pupils registered in grades one through six.

As expressed by teachers, the outstanding features of the Sacramento compensatory education program are these:

1. the reduction of class size by the addition of one teacher per school,
2. the addition of a compensatory education teacher in each of the schools involved in the study,
3. the provision of a resource teacher for the seven schools involved in the in-school program,
4. the involvement, dedication, and assistance of the principal in each of the pilot schools,
5. the provision of funds for additional field trips, materials, and supplies,
6. the freedom to develop the program which best fits the needs of pupils in the individual schools,

7. the increased understanding and involvement of the teachers in the schools, and
8. the addition of a work-experience clerk for doing the clerical work which takes so much teacher time. In particular, the work-experience clerk does the duplicating of individual and/or group stories so that teachers can make increased use of the language experience approach in many subject areas.

Principals concur with the opinions of teachers and they add to the list of outstanding features:

1. the extended services of the school nurse which makes it possible for her to assist parents in solving the health problems of children, and the development of improved attitudes toward the schools;
2. the parent-nursery program which has given parents increased understanding of the preschoolers' needs and a greater interest in the schools and their problems;
3. the cooperation of various community agencies, including the colleges and the university, particularly in providing tutorial services for extended-day programs; and
4. the noticeable improvement in teacher attitudes as reflected in the improvement of teacher-pupil rapport, changes in teaching styles and approaches to learning, and greater identification with pupil needs.

Further Needs of the Program

While the consensus is that the various programs have been very beneficial, there are a number of problems that as yet are not resolved.

1. There is need for adequate measures to evaluate the total program. As the length of time increases in which pupils are involved in the compensatory program, standardized achievement tests will be used in various subject areas. There is need, however, for a valid, reliable instrument for measuring attitudinal and behavioral changes. Until pupils have good attitudes which are reflected in their behavior, their achievements will continue to lag.
2. Teachers and principals all report that reduction of class size contributes greatly to the success of the programs. While Sacramento has reduced class sizes in this program, there is still much to be desired in the reduction of the number of pupils per teacher.
3. Psychological services should be extended.

4. Consultant services should be provided to make teachers increasingly aware of learning styles of pupils, their behavior and learning problems, and how best to motivate and to teach children who are culturally different or culturally deprived.
5. More parent-nursery programs are needed. The existing programs need to be expanded. In those areas in which children are culturally different or culturally deprived, all preschool children, under the guidance of skilled personnel, should be given opportunities for many personal experiences that are rich and varied. The preschool program should give many opportunities for the children to expand their vocabularies and to express orally their own ideas and feelings and to relate their experiences.

Lois Grose
Pittsburgh Public Schools
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PATTERN PRACTICE IN ENGLISH

Schenley High School, a four-year comprehensive high school in the city of Pittsburgh, is currently carrying on a pilot project in the use of pattern drills as a technique for the development of standard rather than substandard speech habits in its students.

More than half of Schenley's students come from homes which must be considered culturally disadvantaged; consequently substandard speech patterns are very prevalent. Yet this same group of students contains many individuals who are able and ambitious. Though a college education has not been a tradition of the community from which these students come, several forces are tending to change this situation. Students and parents are becoming aware of the scarcity and undesirability of the jobs available to the uneducated person in this era of automation. More and more opportunities for scholarships are opening up for students who have the potential and the desire to pull themselves above the level of their present social and economic environment. The improvement of speech skills is a necessity for such advancement. Intelligent students realize this; the obligation rests on the schools to make it possible for students to learn, almost as a second language, the patterns of standard speech.

Most students have learned in school the grammatical principles on which standard speech is based. The speech habits used with family and peers for many years, however, are so firmly intrenched that a knowledge of the structure of language does not in itself bring about the desired results; additional time and a different method from the traditional procedure of the English classroom are required to bring about student mastery of standard patterns. Both time and method can be obtained through the application to English of the pattern drill techniques currently being used in the teaching of modern foreign languages. Such an application has been made in Pittsburgh through the publication of *Verbal English Pattern Drills* and the subsequent transfer of the drills to tape, the form Schenley High School is now using.

The development of materials for pattern practice requires an under-

standing of the psychological principles of language learning, a familiarity with the particular substandard speech patterns of a community, and time to work on the project. Fortunately in Pittsburgh a setup for professional experimentation was available in the Coordinated Education Center, an office established as part of a demonstration program in curriculum continuity carried on cooperatively by the University of Pittsburgh and the Pittsburgh Public Schools and financed by a grant from the Ford Foundation. Under the auspices of this program, interlevel committees of college, high school, and elementary school personnel had been working for several years to prepare curricula which would be truly articulated, avoiding the gaps and overlapping which are apt to characterize the usual segmented program.

For this project a committee of four persons set to work to prepare the pattern drills. Three of the committee members were teachers in junior or senior high schools in socially disadvantaged areas. The consultant and director of the group was Joseph Mastronie, Associate Professor of Modern Language at the University of Pittsburgh. Dr. Mastronie, having already worked with committees preparing pattern drills in French and Spanish, was thoroughly familiar with the philosophy of language learning on which the drills are based and with the techniques used in their preparation.

The committee first asked all English teachers in the secondary schools to record for a week the substandard speech patterns heard in their classroom and to report these to the committee. Of the speech errors reported a high proportion fell into three categories: use of verbs, use of pronouns, and agreement. Although all of these areas are represented in the first set of pattern drills prepared, the committee decided to give major emphasis to practice in the use of verbs.

The drills themselves, as prepared by the committee, follow closely the practice of pattern drills for modern foreign language in utilizing analogy rather than analysis to make habitual the use of standard speech structures. Each drill consists of four parts: the statement of the subject, or the error with which the drill is concerned (intended primarily for the teacher); the directions for performing the drill; the model sentences which set the correct pattern; and the drill items. A sample drill follows:

VERB: TO COME

Subject: Drill on the correct use of *come* in the simple past tense.
Directions: Answer the question negatively, using the same subject and the correct simple past tense form of *come*.
Listen to the three models:

Use "yesterday" in the response.

1. Will he come today?
   No, he came yesterday.
2. Is it true that Nick will come tomorrow?
   No, Nick came yesterday.
3. Will she come today?
   No, she came yesterday.

Now begin:

1. Will the milkman come today? #
   No, the milkman came yesterday.
2. Will John come today? #
   No, John came yesterday.
3. Are Jean and Bernie coming today? #
   No, Jean and Bernie came yesterday.
4. Do supplies come today? #
   No, supplies came yesterday.
5. Are they coming to dinner today? #
   No, they came to dinner yesterday.
6. Will the salesman come today? #
   No, the salesman came yesterday.
7. Will he come today? #
   No, he came yesterday.
8. Will Bill and Carol come to visit today? #
   No, Bill and Carol came to visit yesterday.

While the committee was working on the drills, members of the committee tried them out in their own classrooms. Students responded enthusiastically, with the greatest interest being expressed by the most capable students. The students who participated in these try-out drills made many suggestions which were incorporated into the drills as finally published.

When the first set of drills was completed, the committee arranged to put them on tape. The soundproof taping room of the language laboratory in Schenley High School was used for the taping. Only two voices were used: Dr. Mastronie's for the male voice and that of one of the committee members for the female voice. All the drills follow the same pattern. After the directions a sentence is recited by the taped voice. A pause ensues, long enough for the student response; then the taped voice gives the correct response. Obviously if the teacher's response differs from that given by the student, the student knows that either he has not listened carefully enough to understand the directions, or he has not mastered the correct response to this language situation.

The tapes can be used in either of two ways. Individual students

who particularly need this pattern practice may be scheduled to a language laboratory at certain periods of the day or may work with a tape recorder in a room set aside for that purpose. When whole classes need such drills, a teacher may use the tapes for a short period of time at the beginning of the class period. The experience of members of the committee proved that the pattern practice was most effective when used for no more than five or ten minutes. Perhaps two drills could be carried on during this time. The committee felt also that the practice was more effective when the tape was used than when the teacher simply read the drills.

As stated earlier, the drills will be tried out for class use in Schenley High School during the second semester of the present school year. The Audiovisual Department has equipped each English classroom with a tape recorder. Teachers will use the drills for no more than a ten minute period each day during this semester of experimental use.

Many more drills are needed to cover the areas of sub- -idard speech. We hope after this period of field testing to set up a program for further development of pattern practice materials. Elementary teachers and supervisors are interested in using pattern drills; certainly their use should begin much earlier than in the senior high school. A problem still to be solved is how to organize the use of pattern practice drills in cumulative fashion to provide the needed amount of repetition without overlapping. With the current emphasis on provision for the culturally disadvantaged, surely money, time, and talent will be available to build the best possible program for developing skills in standard speech for urban students who need such help.

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ALL CHILDREN CAN LEARN WHAT THEY ARE TAUGHT, IF—

All children are deprived; all children are advantaged; so are we all. But all children can be taught, and all children can learn what they are taught, if—

For example,

EUGENE

an eight-year-old, one of five children; no father; the mother the breadwinner; no books and little conversation in the home. Eugene just could not learn to read; frustrated, he sat, sullen and silent except at times when his pent-up feelings burst out in uncontrolled anger.

One day his teacher noticed that he seemed absorbed in a book. It was Jerrold Beim's *Thin Ice*.[1] Not just once, but day after day Eugene returned to this book, the story of Lee, another little boy who could not read, and who dreaded Monday with its return to school and failure. But there was a happy ending, for Lee *did* learn to read. It happened one Saturday when Lee and his little brother Bobby had gone to a pond to skate. Lee noticed a sign nearby, and he felt impelled to read it. It meant a painful effort. But little by little he finally managed to get the meaning. The sign gave a warning, "Thin ice! Keep off!" Lee dashed after Bobby, who was skating dangerously near the crackling ice. Bobby was saved, and Lee became a hero. Buoyed by the admiration given him, Lee went back to school on the following Monday and started on the road to learning to read.

Eugene's teacher helped him read the story and, when he had completed it, suggested that he tell it to his classmates. Earlier in the year, his teacher had suggested that he join the school Story Tellers' Group as a possible means of rousing his interest in books. There, as in the classroom, he had sat unresponsive, taking no part. Now, after successfully telling the story, *Thin Ice*, in his own classroom, he might be ready, the teacher

[1] Jerrold Beim, *Thin Ice* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1956).

thought, to try it with the Story Tellers' Group. Eugene seemed pleased at the idea. Then he, the teacher, and the children set to work in earnest in preparing Eugene for this new venture. Tape recordings were made from time to time of Eugene's narration, and all helped in its improvement.

The tape gives the language and tone of Eugene's voice, but it does not give the earnestness and absorption expressed not only in his face but in his whole body that day he faced the Story Tellers' Group with a contribution that completely held the attention of his hearers. He and Lee were one personality laboriously deciphering the sign by the pond:

> It looked like "think," but it wasn't. It began "th." It is "thin." Then he went on to the next word. It's "ice cream." It is not "cream," it is "ice." He began on the next word. It began like "king." It looked like "ping," but it wasn't. It was "keep." Then he began on the next word. It began like "on." But it wasn't. It was "off." Then he said it three times, "Thin ice! Thin ice! Keep off! Keep off!" Then he knew that word.

The identification of the real child with the imagined one continued, and at the end all of the longing for recognition that was Eugene's was expressed in his joyful telling of the praise accorded Lee.

Eugene has a beautiful speaking voice—undiscovered until this episode—and is in increasing demand as a story teller. He takes his place, too, in making the morning announcements over the school intercom. And, he *is* learning to read.

Again, for example,

TEN LITTLE 'SLEUTHS'

children from homes where parents are able economically to give their children what we, in our country, regard as the good life; children in homes where there are both books and conversation in abundance.

These particular children were in the fourth grade in the fall of 1962 when they started on a hunt which lasted for two full years and which did not reach its culmination until the fall of 1964 and, indeed, is still going on. It was September, and the children were planning with their teacher their emphases for the year. Some things they would all do together; some in groups; and some individually.

One of the children asked why their school was named Evan G. Shortlidge. Their teacher was able to tell them that Mr. Shortlidge had been a member of the city school board and that he had been a physician, but nothing more. Some had noticed his portrait in the hall, but all that it told was the name of the artist, Clawson S. Hammitt. Ten of the children said that they would like to be in a committee to write a biography of Evan G. Shortlidge.

The search was on. As one of the children wrote, "Trying to find out about Dr. Shortlidge who lived so long ago (1844-1913) made us feel like detectives tracking clues on a case." This is a true interpretation of what these children did in the spirit and with the techniques of genuine research.

Their report gives the story. It is divided into five parts: I. Introduction, telling how they became interested, the ways they got their information, the phone calls they made, the letter writing involved, their meetings, the trips and visits they made, and their thoughts about the project; Part II, listing all to whom they were indebted and in what way; Part III, the biography; Part IV, their conclusions; and Part V, their references.

Beginning with their school library they moved on to the city library, to phone books current and past to find any one with the name of Shortlidge; to the newspaper morgue and microfilms; and then from one person to another following clues. In all, they made thirty-seven personal contacts among whom were just four Shortlidges. Two members of the family eluded them, two granddaughters who they were told lived in California. They were finally located—Mrs. Robert J. Tripp and Mrs. Gordon Dennis—through the good offices of the local paper, the *News-Journal*. After the report had been completed, there was real excitement when Mrs. Dennis sent the children an autograph album that had been kept by Evan G. Shortlidge.

The report has been mimeographed and copies bound by the office of the Board of Education, and a deluxe copy containing the photographs taken on trips and the source material collected is now in the library of the Shortlidge School. The finished product is of unusually high quality reflective of the many facets of life the children had encountered in their pursuit of knowledge of a man worthy of the search. School and community had merged as the children worked during weekends and two summers in their own homes and in the homes of those they had sought out in their search, in offices, in museums, wherever their clues might lead.

The children's conclusion is a tribute not only to the man they honored but also to their own insight:

> We think Dr. Shortlidge would be very proud that the Evan G. Shortlidge School is named after him. It is the right kind of memorial for this kind doctor, who worked for forty years to help schools. He must have loved children very much.

IF

little Eugene and our ten little sleuths—children all of them: Little Eugene for whom the path of learning is uphill and rugged; the ten who trip lightly and joyously welcoming each door as it opens to new adventures in learning—children all of them. Different, yes; but more alike than different. Most certainly are they alike in their requirement for the conditions that make it possible for them to learn what we would teach them. This they all can learn, if—.[2]

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[2]The two illustrations are happenings in two of the public elementary schools of Wilmington, Delaware. The first is the North East School and the teacher, Mrs. Grace Cobb; the second, the Evan G. Shortlidge School, and the teacher, Miss Ruth Bornmann.

II.

Composition

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THE NORTHWESTERN CURRICULUM STUDY CENTER LESSONS IN COMPOSITION

The lessons which are being prepared by the Northwestern Project English Curriculum Center are an attempt to face a twofold problem: the education of teachers about the "facts" of composition, and the creation of lessons for student use which will teach them to write. According to *The National Interest and the Teaching of English* (1961), which has become the fact book on this problem, between 40 and 60 percent of the teachers occupying English classrooms in junior and senior high schools did not have English majors in college. This bulletin also reports that three out of five English majors and three out of four English minors who can be certified to teach English in the secondary schools were not required to complete advanced work in composition while they were in college. Then, too, the quality of the content of advanced composition courses which were taken by some is in doubt since the evidence presented by most textbooks indicates that the principles of composition which are taught are redactions of outmoded and often erroneous rhetorical systems. In most of them no attempt seems to have been made to examine and prepare lessons on contemporary types of writing (the assumption being, I suppose, that writers are still writing the same kinds of essays that were written a century ago, an assumption which is doubtful considering the great changes in commercial and private life within the last century). The Northwestern Center, therefore, has made an investigation of contemporary types of prose nonfiction and has created materials to teach teachers and students what the contemporary prose types are, what the characteristics of each type are, and how to write these kinds of prose.

Since the currently available knowledge about the teaching of composition is less complete than that about the teaching of literature or language (although it seems that this last is becoming less rigidly defined all of the time) and since it is our belief that what the teacher does in the composition classroom is more important than the materials he takes into the classroom with him, this article will discuss the major premises which

underlie the lessons we are writing, premises which can be used by teachers in their own classrooms regardless of the materials they are using. Every piece of writing, after all, exhibits (through presence or absence) principles of composition and can be used by composition teachers as a model for student analysis to teach some of the aspects of good writing.

The seven basic premises:

1. All writing is a creative process.
2. The pre- and post-writing processes which a writer performs are as important as the actual act of writing and the student must be taught all of the steps of the composition process.
3. Writing takes time.
4. Contemporary prose can be accurately and validly categorized.
5. The teacher of composition is less a teacher of "good" language than he is a teacher of written communication skills.
6. The teacher must give highly structured assignments.
7. Students can best learn to write by examining carefully selected models.

Writing is a creative process. The depreciation of the writing process expressed by Joyce Kilmer has been repeated too long and too loudly. Whether a child is writing a thank you note to his grandmother for a wristwatch, a report on the costumes of the Carthaginians for his Latin teacher, or a short skit depicting the physical prowess of the captain of the football team for a pep rally, he is, by a highly complex set of processes, creating something that did not exist before. The realization of this fact is important for the composition teacher because it implies an acknowledgement of the difficulty of the assignment which he is giving the student. It means that the teacher will be prepared to evaluate the finished paper as a "creation"[1] and not as the product of a formula or the outcome of following a set of rules. It means that the teacher will provide the opportunity and atmosphere necessary for creation and will emphasize the process rather than the result.

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[1]The common use of the term "creative writing" to refer to the writing of poems, short stories, short plays and the like leads to a mistaken notion of the essential nature of the act of composition. All writing is "creative"; every time a writer writes he creates something that did not exist before he wrote. A more useful and less misleading (although it is still somewhat misleading) term to use to refer to writing poems, short stories, etc., is "imaginative writing."

The pre- and post-writing processes which a writer performs are as important as the actual act of writing and the student must be taught all of the steps of the writing process. Most composition textbooks neglect the functions the writer must perform except that of actually writing the paper. But the truth is that the writer does several things before he writes and he does several things after he writes. These functions are as important to the quality of the final product as the actual writing of the paper. Therefore, if we expect a student to write well, we must teach him to perform these functions. As W. W. Douglas, Director of the Northwestern Center, states in the "Introduction" to *Some Lessons in the Basic Processes of Composition*:

> It seems odd indeed to suppose that a child will learn how to compose a paper by trial and error, when learning in no other subject of the curriculum is left to proceed in such fashion. Yet that is, precisely, what English teachers do. We assign a subject (My Summer Vacation) or a type (description, narration), mention a certain number of words, and then wait for papers to come in *corrected*. And when we are correcting the papers, we regularly point out what is absent or missing from the papers, what quality this one has failed to achieve, what virtue is lacking in this one, what grace in that one. We do not ever say what the student should have done, as he wrote or before, to avoid these failures in his product. We expect that the student will avoid future failures if we mark the results of past ones.

Those texts which presently include lessons in pre- and post-writing processes do not indicate how these processes can be taught in the classroom, how the student can be led to discover them and be given practice in them without having to worry about all of the other aspects of writing too. We believe that these important processes can be taught independently and thus more effectively by isolating a particular process and concentrating the student's attention on that process alone. Students must become competent in the prewriting processes before they are faced with the task of performing the later processes.

Before a professional writer sits down to the typewriter to write, he has analyzed the writing situation (Who is his audience? What will they need to know about the subject? What do they already know? How might he best hope to succeed with them? etc.). He has marshalled the information on the subject to discover what gaps in his information he must fill, found the missing information, and perhaps even jotted down phrases that have occurred to him as useful. Then, as he sits at the typewriter, he works at organizing the material and deciding on the phrasing and sentence structure that will provide the proper emphasis and tone in

the paper. Quite often he will reread and rewrite as he writes the first draft, going back to the beginning, and reading through to find out at what point he is in the development of the paper and to keep the structure of the paper in mind, making structural changes as he reads in the light of his more recent writing. After he has finished the first draft, he reads the paper and begins editing it. He may rewrite the paper several times before he is satisfied with the product. Then he proofreads the paper for spelling, punctuation, and other "mechanical" errors before he makes his final draft of the paper. At this point he is usually joined in his efforts by an editor or a group of editors and the final paper is a result of their collaboration.

If all of these steps are necessary for the professional writer, are they not necessary also for the student writer? But the student writer must be trained to perform them. This means that the teacher must be more than a giver-of-directions ("Be sure to proofread your papers before you hand them in."); he must be a teacher, providing guidance in each of these steps of the composition process, perhaps acting as an editor in the final stages of the writing.

To expect the student to perform this step by step process every time he is assigned a paper is, however, asking him to spend a great amount of time on each paper. That composition is a time consuming task is not in doubt, but whether we presently give the student enough time to write is. This leads to the next major assumption in our lessons on composition.

The student must be given time to write. If we teach the student to go through the various steps enumerated above when he writes, we must also give him enough time to do each of these things carefully. As a matter of fact, we must give him more time than he needs merely "to go through" the process. Because composition is as creative and individualistic as it is, we cannot expect every student to be ready to write any time we give an assignment. Some students may need more time to find the information for their papers than others; some may need more time for writing the first draft; others may write immediately but need more time for revision and "letting the paper mellow." Writing is not a process that can be put on a time schedule. Only very experienced writers can meet deadlines, and then not consistently, and at the same time always turn out high quality pieces of writing. To expect this of the student who is just beginning to write is to assure his failure and frustration on some assignments. Admittedly, paper assignments must have some deadline (for the sake of the teacher's sanity, if for nothing else), but these deadlines

should be flexible, especially on the lower grade levels. As the students gain facility in writing, more rigid time limits can be imposed.

This third premise also comments on another problem facing the composition teacher—the in-class paper. If we admit that writing is a time-consuming task, we cannot expect students to write a finished paper, performing all of the necessary steps, within one class period. The Braddock, Lloyd-Jones, Schoer report on *Research in Written Composition* (NCTE, 1963) suggests that teachers should consider "permitting primary grade children to take as much as 20 to 30 minutes, intermediate graders as much as 35 to 50 minutes, junior high school students 50 to 70 minutes, high school students 70 to 90 minutes, and college students two hours" to write a paper. Considering the length of time suggested for the high school students by this report, it is clear that unless at least the pre-writing steps are performed before the class period in which the writing is done, we cannot expect good results from a student writing a paper in the normal 40-50-60 minute period. Students preparing to write an examination do, ostensibly, perform these pre-writing tasks before entering the classroom to take the test. In their review for the test they collect their information and structure that information in some convenient form. They may even invent useful phrases which reduce large difficult concepts to an accurate capsule form.

Contemporary prose can be accurately and validly categorized. One of the problems which faces the teacher today is the lack of a helpful set of categories of modern prose. The four forms of discourse do not purport to be a typology of prose although they are often used as such by writers of composition textbooks. When they are, their inconsistency immediately becomes apparent. Two of them, description and narration, describe the method of development while the other two, exposition and argumentation, describe the author's purpose. Then, too, as the books keep saying, few papers are purely narrative or descriptive (aside from papers written for the artificial assignments which teachers give when teaching these types); thus, learning to write a descriptive paper or a narrative paper is learning to write a paper that one rarely would have occasion to write.

What the teacher needs is a set of categories that will provide valid titles for prose types which are being written today, titles which lend insight into how these papers are written. There are, of course, as many ways to categorize essays as there are aspects of the essay (subject matter, style, organization, purpose, audience situation, etc.). The problem is to choose a typology that will restrict the field enough to be helpful and

yet be broad enough to have a wide application. We feel that we have found two kinds of categories that will do just that. We have divided our lessons in prose writing into lessons in three forms of discourse: journalistic, practical, and academic (based on the audience and the situation for which the piece is written). Then within each set of lessons the student learns to write the report, the analysis, and the evaluation, three types of essays which proceed from the simplest to the most complex handling of the subject matter.

The teacher of composition is less a teacher of "good" language than he is a teacher of written communication skills. Just as the child learns to speak imitatively, so he learns to write imitatively. As soon as he learns to read, he begins to learn the conventions of writing. His compositions become a blend of the transcription of his spoken dialect and the use of literary conventions he has synthesized from his reading. The teacher can only help the child expand his command of the conventions of written English and try to help him understand and master the various written "dialects" of our literature. Often, however, the teacher is too intent on red-penciling spelling errors, punctuation errors, and awkward sentence constructions. The result is that the student develops anxiety about the "correctness" of his compositions and cannot concentrate on the problems that he should—expressing his thoughts fully, clearly, and uniquely. Until teachers regard student papers as the most personal kind of student property, property that must be respected as private and inviolable, they will continue to get papers which say nothing and say it in the most stilted, stiff manner possible.

The teacher must give highly structured assignments. Unless the assignment specifies clearly what the paper is to accomplish, the student is left to wonder just what is expected of him, increasing his frustration and complicating his task immensely. Then, too, the teacher must specify exactly what he expects the paper to do (what effect it should have on the audience) if he is to have any basis for objectively analyzing and assessing the paper. For example, if he asks the students to write a report of the typical student's lunch period for a publication which will be sent to all of their parents, the student will know exactly what the subject matter is and who his audience will be; thus, the student and the teacher can concretely judge the successes and failures of the paper. Students should not, however, be asked to write papers for an audience with which they are not familiar (the Security Council of the United Nations, the groundlings in Shakespeare's Globe Theater, etc.).

We believe that students can best learn to write by examining care-

fully selected models.[2] Since we feel that students learn to write by imitating those compositions that they have read, we make extensive use of professional models in our lessons, asking the students to imitate these models and thereby developing their own repertoire of rhetorical devices. All of our lessons proceed from an analysis of literary models which have been carefully selected to embody the principles of composition which any particular lesson aims to teach. The student is led by discussion to discover the principle for himself and then is asked to imitate the model. Finally, he is asked to make a wider, more original application of the principle. The composition process seems to be so subjective and so difficult to master that we feel this kind of reliance on models not only teaches more effectively, but also increases the student's chance of success, thus encouraging him in the often frustrating task of learning to write. At the same time, he is learning to be a careful, mature reader of often very difficult prose.

[2]The model may be used in teaching composition in two ways: it may serve as a source of ideas and be used as a part of invention, or it may be used as a pattern for sentence or paragraph structure, organization of the theme, tone, style, etc. The pitfall of using the model exclusively as an example of good prose and nothing more ("the rhetoric of the finished word") is admirably stated by D. Gordon Rohman, "Pre-Writing: The Stage of Discovery in the Writing Process," *College Composition and Communication,* XVI, 2 (May 1965), 106-112.

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REMEDIAL COMPOSITION

The students in a remedial composition class are special. Much like turtles, they are either withdrawn in a shell or snapping at anything that prods them. To get them to extend themselves, the teacher must create a supportive environment, diagnose their difficulties, and develop methods and materials which will help them move.

Probably these students have a history of chronic problems which stem from their home environment. We know that the most critical age for learning to manipulate symbols is the two to four year old period. Research also indicates that most "problem" students have shown symptoms since the primary grades. Obviously, then, the teacher cannot solve the problems that have been developing for the past ten years, 6/7 of the student's life. What he can do is remove the frustrations which have made it impossible for the student to achieve.

That is, the particular classroom environment is isolated—it is different. And the teacher can so structure that environment that the student finds success in it. While this may not overcome a complex syndrome of problems, it will at least allow the teacher to help the student develop skills and achieve success in the narrow confines of the remedial writing class.

To create such an environment, the teacher must present tasks with which the students can achieve success. The remedial student has had many failures, and every failure is a threat. It says to the student, "You're no good." The student's way to avoid failure is to quit trying. Then, he rationalizes, the reason for the teacher's criticism is not that he can't do the assignment, but simply that he doesn't want to. He thus avoids threats to his ego and at the same time asserts his independence of authority. As this pattern develops he becomes less attentive in class, learns less, becomes a behavior problem, and generally compounds the inadequacy of his work with a belligerent attitude.

Such a pattern can be broken by success. Simple tasks done well in class and praised by the teacher can help the remedial student participate more willingly. Individual attention—to students seldom recognized

except as behavior problems—will also encourage participation. Individualization is also necessary because of the student's inability to learn in a normal group situation. Quite often, group instructions which are not followed will be followed if given in exactly the same manner to individuals. Of course, variation in ability and interest also suggests individualized instruction.

English teachers have habits which are particularly likely to frustrate remedial students. First, they fear activity which is not completely under their supervision. As a consequence, students are usually allowed a minimum amount of participation in classroom discussion. Teachers assume that because small student groups arrive at conclusions far more slowly, they are wasting time. This is probably not true. Although students—particularly remedial students—are inclined to get off the topic, usually this misdirection is a sign of frustration with the task at hand. If the teacher will carefully plan the use of small group work so that the students have been given the specific tools necessary to solve the particular problem presented; if he will structure the goal of the group so that it is clearly stated and within the range of the student's ability; and if he will recognize getting off the topic as a signal of the need for better structure in the situation rather than as a signal to end this opportunity for learning self-direction, then he will find that over the period of a year the students will exhibit tremendous growth in their ability to work in small groups with less teacher direction.

The English teacher also tends to overtalk reading assignments. With a long and thorough educational background in literary analysis and interest in the abstract problems implied in literary works, he tends to deal with works at a level far removed from the students. Careful attention to what students have to say about a story, and careful attempts to move them just a bit from where they are will result in greater willingness on the part of the students to read. Curiously, these remedial students need a great deal of reading material in the classroom. While gifted students see many ramifications in a single work, the remedial students may need many works to develop a single abstraction. As a consequence the teacher must have far more materials available.

Third, English teachers mark themes too conscientiously. We have all had strong reactions toward a paper of ours which was, in our opinion, overmarked. The remedial student's reactions are even stronger. Already discouraged and ready to quit, he responds only to encouragement. Besides, he doesn't know what the marks mean or how to correct the errors which they indicate. For such a student, the comments should be limited to praise.

Finally, these students will not do homework. Many write poorly in a well-structured classroom situation where the teacher can provide direction and assistance. It is unreasonable to expect them to be able to work at home. Out of class assignments will simply lead to more failure and less interest.

The previous paragraphs emphasize many specific differences between the teacher's usual behavior pattern and the pattern necessary to create a supportive environment for remedial students. Perhaps the teacher can gain more by considering the general attitude of which these particulars are a part. The Gestalt necessary for the remedial classroom is acceptance of the student. We teachers are conscientious, interested, and well prepared for our classes. We are middle class, with all the goal-directed, social characteristics that term connotes. And we fail to understand people who are otherwise. If a student fails to bring a pencil to class we are always dismayed, often frustrated, and sometimes infuriated. So we set up rules–"Three points off if you don't have a pencil; you can't come to class without your book." Unfortunately, students sometimes prefer not to come to class. So we take them to the office, perhaps call home, and generally make the student's attitudes toward school much worse.

The tools of learning–books, paper, pencils–are symbols to these students. Honors and average students don't sit in class and tear paper to shreds. Honors and average students don't break pencils into smaller and smaller pieces. These are behavior patterns of the frustrated students; they are releasing their frustrations against the whole cultural institution of education through their behavior toward these symbols. When the students arrive in class unprepared, without pencil or paper, it might be better to simply furnish them. The learning possible with these tools may be more important than the fight over bringing them. If the teacher recognizes the tremendous difference between these students and himself, he will be better prepared to recognize these behavior patterns as effects of the frustration problem, and be better able to create the successes which will remedy the problem rather than dealing merely with the effects.

But the general characteristics of remedial students suggest techniques which seem particularly appropriate. Because these students usually lack self-discipline, they need maximum direction. For the same reason, they can't stay with one activity for a long period of time. Because they are not interested in abstractions, their work must be concrete. What techniques fit this pattern?

Spelling is one good subject for these students, even though research

shows that systematic spelling drill with lists has little carry-over to writing situations. It is valuable because it is concrete, kinesthetic, easy, directed, and short. It also sets a pattern—a comfortable thing for these students—and gives the students an opportunity to succeed. Monday the students take the pretest dictated by the teacher. The teacher then spells the words correctly for the students and they correct their errors. The teacher collects the papers and corrects them. (Many students will either not have found their errors or will have made a mistake in the correction.) Tuesday these papers are distributed and the students copy on the back the number of the words they missed. This time when the words are dictated they write only those they previously missed. Wednesday all students take the full test. Thursday those who had all the words correct are excused from the test; the others take only the words they have missed. Friday all the students take the test. After the first two or three weeks, the students will be familiar with this pattern and the teacher will recognize the best spellers. Then one of the students who gets all the words correct on Monday may be put in charge of the spelling for that week. This both recognizes student accomplishment and frees the teacher to work with individual students.

This activity is not suggested to teach spelling—research suggests that it will not accomplish this end. It is suggested because it begins the class in an orderly fashion, frees the teacher to work with individuals, gives recognition to the best students, and gives everyone a chance to succeed. Excellent lists of words at the students' level can be culled from elementary spelling books and from the students' themes.

Work with sentence patterns can be organized in the same fashion as a short activity to end the period. This structured concrete program at the beginning and end of the period provides a frame of easy work and successful experience which helps create a supportive environment.

Within the environment, the teacher's first job is to diagnose student abilities and weaknesses. Such diagnosis should cover the areas of idea, organization, syntax, and mechanics. As with remedial reading, the diagnosis should begin at the level at which all students can achieve success and gradually move to more difficult problems.

Boys of remedial writing caliber seldom write anything; the girls often write notes to their friends about dates, boys, and gossip. Yet even these seldom exceed a single page. They are limited in their patterns of thought, and consequently limited in their ability to write. Perhaps the best program for these students would be one which dealt more directly with thinking than with writing, but that is a subject for an entirely different course of investigation. Assuming that we should deal with

writing, what types of problems can we find with which they can deal successfully? A relatively superficial analysis of writing tasks suggests a possible sequence of difficulty.

1. Writing a summary of a short story is a very easy assignment. The ideas are directly available and already organized. Nearly every student can successfully write about such a topic.
2. Next in difficulty comes the personal narrative. Students will have little difficulty in recalling events, and they are still chronologically organized. The greatest difficulty of this assignment will be assisting the students in filling in the necessary description to round out the writing.
3. Pure description calls for more acute observation and/or imagination than these students are used to using. But these are available to the students if they can be taught to observe. Also, the organizational pattern is not prescribed but must be developed.
4. Exposition of a process or an abstraction is even more difficult because the ideas as well as the organization must be developed by the student.
5. Perhaps argumentation is the most difficult writing process because the student must develop ideas, organize them, and foresee the opposing arguments which he must answer in his writing.

This pattern of difficulty has no foundation in psychology or learning theory. It is the result of observation and trial in the classroom. It would be presumptuous to assume that this pattern will apply to all students. Some are extremely adept at argumentation, while others find exposition to be their forte. But no matter what individual pattern the teacher diagnoses, this hypothesis can be a place to start.

Should a student be unable to follow the chronological sequence, or unable to recognize main ideas and important details, he needs to develop these fundamental skills in a remedial reading class. He should be accepted in a remedial composition class only after he attains these skills. Students who can successfully write a short story summary will furnish the teacher with a basis for diagnosing difficulties in syntax and mechanics.

Marking themes for this purpose is a relatively simple process. Underlining spelling errors and writing the usual English teacher shorthand in the margin are adequate. The important emphasis is the use of these marks after they have been made. The specific skills should be remedied only one at a time and only after a sufficient body of writing has been collected to assure that the error is a major problem for the student. Instruction in small groups or with individuals is probably the best

approach because these students are seldom able to concentrate on an abstraction presented to the whole class. They are much more likely to respond to individual attention.

It is often possible to let students help each other. When one student has conquered a particular skill, asking him to help others will be a tremendous boost to his ego. Also, such an arrangement again helps free the teacher and allows students to develop their ability to work with less teacher direction.

Organizational ability can be diagnosed from the students' ability to work with description, exposition, and argumentation. Each assignment provides its own difficulties and suggests various patterns for the student to learn.

But the diagnosis of problems is only the first step. The major problem is, of course, how to overcome these difficulties, that, is, how to teach. This is of course the problem that each of us faces each period in the classroom. Yet with the good student the problem is minimized. A technique may be presented abstractly by the teacher, objectively understood by the student, and consciously applied until it becomes a part of his behavior pattern. That is, the technique becomes internalized; it becomes a part of the student. How can we get the slow student to internalize behaviors? Certainly not by merely presenting techniques in abstract form. Instead, we must give the student concrete experience in the use of the technique until its use has been absorbed—perhaps unconsciously. The practice in the use of the technique should be patterned to help the student move from a mimetic performance to an independent performance.

The most obvious mimicry is that of copying exactly. This is the point at which any technique should be introduced. Next, sections of the pattern should be alternately withdrawn so that the student develops his ability to mimic without the entire pattern present. The process should continue until the student can apply the pattern without the aid of a model. At this point, the students should work in small groups so that failures can be corrected without teacher assistance. Of course, the teacher is ready to assist if needed. Also the problem which is to be solved can become less, exactly like those solved through mimicry, so that the students have the opportunity of widening the range of applicability. Finally, the student should apply the pattern to a new situation independently. If he can do this, he shows successful internalization of a behavior pattern.

For example, in a study of courage (adapted from a seventh grade average unit) the students were to define courage. The teaching began

with the presentation of several definitions of objects. (A hammer is a tool used for pounding and pulling nails.) After reading these definitions, the class analyzed their characteristics—indentification of a class and distinction from other members of the class; then they copied from dictation several other definitions of the same form. Next they were given a worksheet, half of which provided the distinction from other members of the class while the other half provided only the class. Some of these definitions were more abstract qualities such as honesty. After they were asked to write definitions independently, they were asked to collect definitions of courage from at least five people. The next day, while they were reading an essay about courage, the teacher discussed each student's errors with him individually. When the reading was completed, the class discussed the definitions they had collected. As they evaluated them, they copied the best ones. They then analyzed the essay for its definition of courage, and finally small groups wrote their own definitions of courage. They had thus been given a background in both definition form and the concept of courage before they were asked to define courage. Later in the unit, they wrote definitions independently.

In the same unit, the students were asked to write a personal narrative about their need for courage. To prepare for this writing assignment, the class first objectified a pattern that was apparent in the reading they had done: the general scene, specific scene, the need for courage, the show of courage, the result, and a conclusion. After the class had abstracted this pattern, there were four steps to writing an individual composition. First, they read and discussed a teacher-written theme about courage. Second, they suggested possible theme topics, selected one at random, and dictated it as the teacher used an overhead projector in writing it. Third, the students wrote another theme of the same type in small groups. Finally, they wrote individual themes. Again, in this more complex area of composition organization, the movement from specific model to independent writing helped them achieve success.

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A PROGRAM FOR TEACHING COMPOSITION TO PUPILS OF LIMITED ACADEMIC ABILITY

The teaching of composition is probably the most difficult and at the same time least rewarding of all the areas included in the English curriculum. An English teacher spends the greatest amount of his time, by far, on student composition. When the composition lesson has been completed and the papers have been read and marked, all too often the teacher has seen no real progress, but instead, can see only the miles that everybody has to go before anybody can get to sleep.

Skill in writing compositions seems to be related to some sort of "native intuition." The degree to which a given student possesses this kind of intuition seems to be the principal factor in determining his proficiency at writing and the quality of his composition product. In every school, at every grade level, there are a considerable number of pupils who appear to lack any such composition intuition. Usually, these pupils possess very little skill at or interest in any of the English studies. Further, their general academic talent is below average. The red scars that point out errors in spelling and mechanics on the papers of these students are so many in number, and the errors themselves so diverse in character, that any comment on such niceties as general organization or style of expression are rendered fatuous.

Frequently, on a given assignment, a student who usually produces a paper of this kind will not turn in to his teacher any composition for appraisal. The teacher who contemplates beyond the immediate lesson sees that this person may not finish high school, will not enter college, and will seek for his vocation some employment which will require an absolute minimum of written expression, if any at all. The pertinent, although complex, question that arises as a result of these insights is: "Why must either teacher or student be involved, at all, in composition activities?" Certainly, the answer cannot be found by referring to interests, abilities, or needs in terms of life goals. Let us delay for a moment the consideration of the rationale for the program in composition for students of low academic ability.

In planning an instructional program, we must consider three major

factors. First is the statement of objectives of the program; these objectives are best formulated in terms of observable student behavior. The second problem involves an assessment of student abilities as they are observed at the inception of the instructional sequence. The third problem is the character of that sequence, including decisions respecting methods and techniques that may best be used in moving the students to the goals.

In order to formulate objectives in a program of composition instruction that is to be used with students of low ability in English, we must return to the problem of the rationale for the program. Presumably, the principal reason for having pupils write compositions is that composition writing is a traditional activity of the educational institution. Without functional skill in composition a student cannot succeed in school. Therefore, we teach our pupils to write compositions because they must know how to write compositions in our schools. Composition writing is expected behavior. This is not merely an academic (no pun intended) point. Since the purpose of composition instruction, in many cases, is entirely intramural, the goals of instruction, and standards for evaluation, can be established on an intramural basis.

The English department faculty can develop an expression of goals that will meet the needs of the students in a given school. Such an expression may be in the form of "We want our students to write good sentences"; or "We want our students to write a single expository paragraph made up of good sentences." The interested layman would see such goals as modest indeed. Many a seasoned professional, however, shrinks from even so modest a formulation, seeing a trap and pitfall in every word. What, exactly, is a paragraph? How long is it? Is there any way to recognize it other than by the typographical convention of indentation? Assuming these problems to be solved, what is the meaning "good" when associated with the word "paragraph"? What is a good paragraph as opposed to a poor paragraph? Assuming these problems to be solved, what is a good sentence? Big problems have small problems on their backs to bite 'em, and so *ad infinitum.*

Whatever the agreed goals may be, the problems of explicitly defining the terms used in expression of the goals must be solved. Goals that relate to composition products must be defined in terms that relate to composition products. Four methods of explicitly defining or describing product goals come to mind:

1. an arbitrary description derived from discussion of the problems by the goal setters;

2. an analysis of the works of established writers which may be taken to be models;
3. an analysis of the composition work of the students at the appropriate level;
4. a combination of any or all of these.

If the goal setters emphasize the third of the suggested techniques, that of analyzing pupil compositions, in devising their descriptions, they secure for themselves an important advantage: realism. Descriptions resting too heavily on the use of other techniques may result in formulations far beyond the power of young writers to approach.

There follows a description of a method in developing a formulation of the kind under discussion here.[1] First a number of teachers at a given grade level collect sets of papers written by students of varying abilities. The teachers exchange sets; this is done to keep identity of writers from biasing the judgments of the readers. Papers are read and scored as superior, adequate, inadequate. Then the characteristics of the papers marked superior and inadequate are noted and compared. Papers marked adequate are not considered, since the presumed contrast between the superior and inadequate papers will be more striking, and thus, more revealing.

The primary targets in the analysis are the more objective elements in the composition products. First of all, such things as the frequency and types of errors in mechanics and spelling are noted. Next, such gross features as paragraph length in terms of numbers of sentences and sentence length in terms of number of words are noted. The next factor might be the occurrence of sentence types, both with respect to structure (that is, simple, complex, compound) and with respect to semantic type (statement, question, command, etc.).

The paragraphs on the papers can now be read to determine if they reveal a real structure. Where does the shortest sentence occur? Where does the longest sentence occur? Which paragraphs contain topic sentences? Where does the topic sentence occur?

Finally, the papers can be read in an effort to expose critical stylistic devices. Which authors have elected to use the omniscient voice, which the first person, and which the second person? Are shifts in view-

[1] The processes described here were developed in a suburban school system in eastern Massachusetts under a grant from SUPRAD, a foundation encouraging curriculum development and research. The teaching practices have been used in the author's classes in a different school system.

point apparent? What kinds of inappropriate usages occur and where in the compositions do they occur? Why are they inappropriate?

At this point the faculty readers, by comparing their notation on superior papers and inadequate papers, will be able to state, rather precisely, just what the differences are to which they have responded in their original scoring of the papers. They will not need to refer to such ambiguous terms as originality, coherence, or pleasing expression. In addition to knowing what the real differences are, they will know which differences really make a difference. At this point the faculty will be able to formulate concrete goals in the composition program for students of low academic ability.

The next giant step is the development of the sequence of baby steps that will move the students from their present stage of composition skill to these goals.

The first phase in the program must be an assessment and description of the characteristics that the compositions display—the compositions of the students in question before any training. Many teachers have found a simple checklist a valuable aid in systematizing their analyses. Information can be gathered both from composition assignments and from informal inventories of spelling skill, punctuation skill, etc. Items on the checklist are best derived from the specific criteria recorded as program goals.

The next phase of the program is knowing what kind of activities to avoid in attempting to move pupils towards the goals. Reference to research can be helpful here. There are in the literature great numbers of studies, indeed, numbers of collections and reviews of studies, indicating procedures that have borne little fruit.[2] The consensus seems to be that the lessons and activities that make up the bulk of the conventional curricula in grammar and usage are of little value in effecting the desired pupil behavior on composition assignments. Quantities of classroom time spent in drill in such areas as internal punctuation, for example, fail to be reflected in usage in student writing. The sad fact is that most English teachers do not need to refer to the literature for this information: they know it from their own unhappy experiences. Many weaker students, it seems, are left more confused than formerly as a result of their exposure to lessons in grammar and usage.

Since the degree of transfer of training from discrete lessons in many areas of grammar and usage is rather doubtful, what approach can a

[2]For example, approximately every two years the *Encyclopedia of Educational Research* publishes such a survey. In addition there are such surveys as that in Hunnicutt and Iverson's *Research in the Three R's.*

teacher take in moving the students toward the goals of the curriculum? The teacher is aware of the nature of the goals in no uncertain terms, having generalized them from his experience in reading a number of compositions. This seems to be a rather high level, complicated intellectual exercise. He has dealt with abstractions and evaluations. He has not read composition book maxims nor written composition book exercises in order to formulate his goals. He has, rather, looked quite closely at examples of student composition which he has felt to be superior in quality. Sound pedagogy suggests that students might emulate this process to some degree and in a controlled situation.

From the survey of student writing undertaken in order to formulate concrete goals the teacher has generalized the characteristics of a good composition. From these generalizations it should be possible to develop a model composition. For example, if paragraphs in good composition have shown a tendency to exhibit a certain structure, the model that is made can be similarly structured. If the first sentence in good paragraphs is the shortest sentence, the first sentence in the model should be the shortest. If the shortest sentence is usually the topic sentence, the model can demonstrate this characteristic. If good compositions have been found to contain compound sentences, the model can contain compound sentences; if it has been found that good writers avoid compound sentences, the model will contain none. Thus a concrete realization of the generalizations of program goals can be developed. This realization can be expressed in the form of a model composition.

Now the teaching of composition has been simplified. Using the model as a basis for composition lessons, the teacher has his pupils work towards imitating it.

The easiest kind of imitation is the kind wherein the general structure of the paragraph and its sentences is left intact. All the words that carry a clear semantic meaning become blanks. The student uses his own words in the blanks. The words that the linguists call function words (prepositions, conjunctions, adverbs like *when, where, if,* relative pronouns, etc.) are retained as they occur in the model. For example, the topic sentence: "The Morgan horse is the most useful animal in working a ranch" becomes: "The _____ is the most _____ _____ in _____." Each student, then, may use this model in formulating original topic sentences: "The atomic sub is the most feared ship in the United States Navy"; or "The French twist is the most popular style in hair-dos." In like manner the whole composition can be developed.

In the first phase of work using a paragraph model, the teacher, in teacher-led lessons, works slowly and carefully with his pupils in an

analysis of his model. As each part of the paragraph is analyzed, the student develops an original sentence in imitation of that part. Finally, he has a complete paragraph. In subsequent lessons, the guidance of the teacher is gradually withdrawn as he notes the ease with which his pupils handle their paragraphs.

As the single paragraph composition is mastered, it will be possible to move into compositions containing more than one paragraph. Appropriate models are provided. Models for specialized kinds of compositions such as book reports can be developed and used.

In his work with students, the author has noted that as students develop proficiency in use of a model, they tend to depart from a rigid adherence to its lines. An unexpected consequence of this kind of composition instruction, and an immensely pleasing one, has been a reduction of frequency of occurrence of a number of characteristics ordinarily not thought to be associated with the composing aspects of composition writing. That is, the quality of the handwriting in terms of legibility improves, the number of mechanical errors decreases, and the number of misspellings decreases! Perhaps these phenomena reflect a decrease in general frustration at writing compositions.

During the school year 1962-1963, the author was one of a group of teachers who developed a model paragraph in such a program. The model is as follows.

> The Siamese is the most interesting cat as a pet. When a cat owner brags about his blue-eyed friend, he usually has a Siamese in mind. Because of its unusual coloring, its fondness for killing rodents, and its love of a good swim, it is always the subject of some interesting doings. Its love of swimming is probably its most interesting feature, since cats usually dislike water. Its many unusual characteristics make its owner the object of envy of other catkeepers and this is despite the fact that the bathroom is out of bounds when someone is taking a bath.

Using this model as a starting point, both teacher and pupils experienced success in improving the composition product. A first single paragraph composition (before special instruction) was submitted by an eighth grade student.

> ENGLISH
>
> I did my composition on Joan Smith. Joan lives at 103 Norcorss St. Shes 13 and one of 4 children 2 brothers and two sisters' Her only Ambition now is to be a housewife. She likes all foods. Her favirate sport is softball.

The first composition (uncorrected) after experience with the model read as follows:

HORSES

Studying horses is the most fasinating subject as a hobby. When a horse owner talkes about his chestnut brown hunter, he usully has a good horse in mind. Because of its ability to jump great heights, its prancing grace, and its love of a good run it is always indulged in some interesting doings. Its love of jumping is probably is greatest feature, Since most animals as big as the horse can't jump at all. Its wounderful characteristics make a horse-owner the envy of many animal owners and this is overlooking the fac• that the horse can not be penned in by a small fence, because he will be up and over in no time.

After two more such essays, the student had obtained a mastery of the form. The next stage was the development of two parallel paragraphs:

My father was brought up the hard way. He was born in the Old Country. He was eleven when his father died, from then on it meant work for him and his older brother. They both had come to America and worked on farms. There was never too much time for enjoying the things most boys had.

* * *

My father's brother-in-law was brought up the easy way. He never had to work. He would just come home from school, do his homework and go out with the boys. He had, as you might call it, a very easy life as a boy.

Notice that the writer has departed from the precise lines of the model. Notice too the decrease in mechanical and spelling errors. The final composition in the series embodies two parallel modeled paragraphs in an original frame consisting of an introductory paragraph, a transitional paragraph anda conclusion.

COMPARISON OF THE GREYHOUND AND THE POODLE

In these two paragraphs I will compare the racing greyhound and the poodle, a house pet.

The greyhound is a racing dog. It is the fastest of all dogs. When the owner of a racing dog talks about his powerful, long-legged friend, he has a greyhound in mind. The dog is short-haired and may be tan, brindle, white, bluish, or spotted. There are different types throughout the world. The dogs weigh from sixty to seventy pounds, but are usually very fast, although they are difficult to care for and expensive to own.

I have told you the facts about keeping greyhounds; now I will tell you about the poodle.

The poodle is a different type of dog. It is usually a pet, and most poodles are smart animals. Poodles can be white, black, grey, blue or brown. Their hair is curley or frizzy and usually clipped or cropped in special ways. The poodle originated in Germany in the 1500's and is expensive to raise and own.

It is easy to see that although a greyhound and poodle are quite different in many ways, they have one characteristic in common; they are both expensive and demand a lot of care and time from the owner.

All these writing samples are reproduced in the form in which they came to the teacher's desk, before revision.

Whatever the shortcomings, the procedure described here seems to result in a greater number of better composition products than the more conventional procedure of (1) the assignment of a topic; (2) the more or less undirected writing activity of the pupils; (3) the endless and somewhat directionless red-marking of errors after the compositions have been produced. To this teacher, the use of the kind of program outlined above has been one way of seeing that some of his promises are kept.

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GETTING THE WHOLE PICTURE

One of the most difficult choices facing the English teacher is the selection of topics for themes. Should the student be allowed free rein so that his creativity is unhampered, or is it necessary to restrict him to a narrow topic so well defined that he cannot wander away from the subject without being painfully aware that he has strayed? Should all themes be the direct outgrowth of classroom experiences, or should the student be expected to call upon his life outside the school? Perhaps both of these sources can be used wisely, varying the ratio as the student matures and exhibits proficiency in organizing and writing themes.

As the teacher approaches the time when he must make a definite choice of subject, does he turn to a list of "Three hundred favorite theme topics" conveniently located in his handbook, or does he search for an idea in the latest novel, short story, play, poem, or essay read in class? Has there been an upheaval in Selma, Alabama, or any other place in the world that could provide an appropriate subject for a theme for the level of students being taught? Is it better to offer only "safe" topics, or should controversial issues be suggested, even though this may prompt telephone calls or visits from parents?

All of these factors are given some consideration whenever an English teacher chooses a topic for a theme, They may not be "ticked off" one by one in a conscious manner, nor do they always need to be. Habit and experience will often eliminate some of the factors. However, the conscientious teacher will attempt to require themes in more than one mode of discourse and on a variety of topics, hoping to spark a response or creative impulse in as many students as possible. This might be termed the "scatter-shot" method, shooting a barrage wide enough to "inflict" an inspiration on each student. Finding the "pellets" to put into this shell can be a continuing task.

Obviously, students find that writing from their own experience is the least difficult, which is a partial excuse for that great American custom of telling "What I Did Last Summer." Though a well-written

recital of facts can warm the heart of any teacher, he is always searching for those Stephen Cranes who can create realistic battles in their imaginations, those William Faulkners who can look deep inside people and societies, or those Robert Frosts who can weave magic with commonplace people, events, and words. Lives there an English teacher who does not examine each new class hoping to see the signs of greatness in at least one pupil? What mysterious word, what enchanted topic can he conjure up to expose the hidden genius sitting so placidly before him?

Most of us must admit to small conjuring powers, if any at all; yet somehow this does not keep one from trying each year. He tries many, many ideas, some his own and some borrowed—or stolen. In sheer desperation, teachers have been known to instruct students to choose any one they like from the list of three hundred, only to find themselves besieged after class with requests for a specific topic. These are the times when teachers make vows "never to do that again." Occasionally one seems to hit upon a practice which fulfills most of his desires. It is simple, yet effective; it is limiting, yet creative; and it can produce more than one mode of discourse. It often can be related to an important news event of the time, and it can lead to a controversial subject, but usually in a limited way. This may be a disadvantage, but there are many other opportunities to select debatable subjects, and no English teacher should ever lack one.

Like so many things in this world, this theme subject was hit upon by chance. I was on the faculty of a school that had an outstanding collection of paintings, most of which went unnoticed by all students not enrolled in art classes, and by many of them, I fear. The director of the art gallery constantly lamented the lack of interest shown in the paintings, so while in an expansive mood I offered to hang one a month in my room.

I was teaching all the sophomores, juniors, and seniors; this was one method of insuring that all of them at least would be exposed to a few paintings. Thus, art found its way into my classroom, with no fanfare, unless the groans of students can be so construed.

It is doubtful that I would have realized the pure gem I had hanging on my classroom wall if I had had more than a speaking acquaintance with the art of painting. My education in the fine arts had been sorely neglected and all I knew had been gleaned from trips to galleries, articles in newspapers and magazines, and some heated arguments on the subject with other nonexperts. We seemed to know what we liked, but we did not know why. This lack of artistic sophistication was matched by the ignorance of the classes, and when they asked why "that thing" was in the class it was difficult to say more than that the colors added to the

decor of the room and that we were getting "culture" by some sort of osmosis, which was "good for them."

As time passed, fewer derogatory comments were heard, and before too many days some students started asking questions of each other. These soon turned into discussions, some of which became loud and argumentative enough to require a referee. As no art teacher was present, I played that part and found myself drawn into making pronouncements regarding color, form, shape, texture, and artistic purpose that probably set art back a decade. By this time it became obvious even to me that the object on the wall was a veritable gold mine for discussion, research, and composition, and it should be utilized.

The first painting on my wall was an impressionistic work by the Mexican muralist Orozco, entitled *Zapatistas*. It is splashed with vivid colors, but the mood created is one of foreboding, even tragedy. Some of the figures loom out of proportion above the others, obviously symbols. The artist is trying to convey some message to the viewer, and many of my students were groping for the communication. Ignorance of art, artists, and history prompted many wild ideas and theories as to the artist's intent, until at last it was decided that the class would look up Orozco to find out who he was and what he had done. It was hoped that some key to the riddle of the meaning of the painting could be found. The first nugget came rolling down the sluice from my gold mine on the wall.

When the biography of Orozco was turned in, disappointment was evident on the faces of most students, for few were any wiser as to the meaning of the painting. A few of the students had managed to do research beyond the biography and to find an art book with the picture. These few could hardly wait to give the rest of the class the benefit of their superior information by interpreting the artist's meaning. However, it was soon evident that their extra knowledge was merely the history of Zapata, which did not shed complete illumination on the symbolism in the picture. No common agreement could be reached, so all agreed that they would like to investigate further.

At this point let me parenthetically state that all of the members of each class did not share equally the enthusiasm for this project. There were those in each class who considered this activity evidence of some mania afflicting only "long hairs," who enjoyed the music of Victor Herbert. There were only one or two in each class, which is considerably below average.

When the classes came in with the results of their searches, the interpretations were many and varied. Though the students were armed with

the facts of the lives of Orozco and Zapata, there was still much room for speculation as to the artist's meaning. Are those figures on foot the peasants going to battle or returning from battle? Are they fleeing? Is one of the large figures Zapata, or is he an official herding the Zapatistas off to jail? Why does the first man seem bowed under a weight? Why are there women in the procession? Gradually the students came to realize that each viewer had to interpret the scene for himself, in the light of his own experiences, values, and attitudes. Some found religious lessons, others discovered political meanings, and still others saw social significance —all in the same painting. This lesson was the second nugget to come rolling down the sluice.

Obviously, the next assignment was to write an interpretation of the picture. This was to be each student's own description of the meaning of the painting, and he was free to use any source for help in getting ideas. This was the third nugget.

After this was turned in, the effectiveness of the work of art was finished, it seemed. It hung upon the wall mostly unnoticed, except occasionally when two or three students would stand in front of it to argue some point of symbolism. About the time the painting had been there its allotted time I was casting about for a theme topic. We had finished reading some short stories and I had suggested that the next theme might take the form of a narrative. When I broached that subject, many worried faces indicated that the prospects of creating a plot, characters, setting, and atmosphere were staggering, so I suggested that each write a narrative which would have one scene that could be illustrated by the painting. After some discussion, this suggestion seemed to clear up most of the difficulties, and so the fourth nugget rolled down the sluice. The four were enough for me to fashion a golden halo for the director who had persuaded me to hang the picture.

I have used this practice at least once each year ever since. As I wished to experiment, I have used different pictures, for excellent copies abound in libraries. I have found that the Orozco seems to be an excellent example of the painting that leads to a study of history and art, and at the same time is so dynamic and dramatic that it tells a story. Other paintings lend themselves to pure description or act as creators of moods to inspire writing. There seems to be no end to the uses of paintings and pictures in the classroom.

I was extremely fortunate that an art teacher carefully chose an exciting, compelling painting to help educate my students in art, and me in the fine art of teaching. His halo is burnished each year.

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TAPE-GRADING

You grade a theme, and another, and another. And you have misgivings about each one: Is *he* still making that same mistake? Is there some symbol to use *here* since there's hardly room in the margin to explain the weakness fully? Is this theme comment really going to be meaningful to *him?* Have I really graded *her* theme well – even if it is full of red marks? I suggest that many of a conscientious teacher's misgivings can be alleviated by using a tape recorder to record theme comments. I have conducted a careful study of tape-grading for two semesters in a college freshman composition course, and I am convinced that it is an extremely worthwhile method of grading. The following report deals with (1) the method of the study; (2) the procedure used; (3) the results in terms of grade achievement and student reaction; and (4) the probable causes for the method's overall success.

The research method used for both semesters of the project contrasted the achievement of a cross section of my freshman classes at Wisconsin State University at Platteville–the experimental group–with that of their classmates–the control group. All received the same assignments. The only difference then was that the experimental group had each theme graded on a magnetic tape.

During the first semester of the project, only twelve of sixty-five students were tape-graded. The twelve were a valid cross section both in terms of their earlier English grades and their scores on the English portion of the ACT test given all incoming freshmen.

Twenty-three of seventy students were arbitrarily selected as the experimental group for the second semester of the project. Since this class was an "off-semester" one, it included students who had received D's or F's in an earlier semester of the same course as well as students who were entering college for the first time. Again the experimental group reflected the makeup of the whole class; the number in each group (F repeater, D repeater, and new entrant) was in proportion to the three groups in the class as a whole. In addition, the average ACT scores were similar.

The criteria both semesters were the final grades received by the experimental group in contrast to the control group. This measurement is admittedly subjective as is any measure of writing; nevertheless, every attempt was made to insure impartiality. Certainly research in composition should not be suspended while waiting for a completely objective means of judging writing quality.

Once the experimental group was selected, the procedure was the same for both semesters. Rather than write marginal comments on each theme, the teacher verbalizes his criticism, positive and negative, on a tape. The student takes the tape to a playback machine in the library, the audiovisual department, or the language laboratory and listens to it until he understands his strengths and weaknesses. If his instructor wishes, the student revises or completely rewrites his theme and submits it. Simple? Yes. And neither the instructor's nor the student's recorder must deliver concert hall reproduction. Both should be reasonably troublefree and able to accommodate a five- or seven-inch reel. (A smaller reel would probably preclude putting all of one student's criticism on the same tape which in turn would prevent him from reviewing earlier criticisms as the semester progresses.) The instructor's recorder should have a neck microphone and a footswitch to leave both hands free for turning theme pages. Used computer tapes, cut to standard size, deliver adequate reproduction and cost less than one dollar each for a seven-inch reel.

Results were positive for both semesters. The average final grade for the experimental group in the first semester's project was 7.5 (C+/B—) versus the control group's 5.5 (C—/C). Tape-grading does seem to increase a new entrant's chances of passing the course (78% of the experimental group passed vs. 67% of the control group) and earning a high grade (C+ vs. C— as average grades). Students who had failed the course earlier were not helped significantly, and students who had received a D earlier seemed to have been penalized by tape-grading. I suggest that the reason for the relatively less impressive results of the D-F repeaters lies in the fact that their composition difficulties are often those of mechanics (simple grammar, punctuation, spelling) whereas new entrants are more likely to be ready for true college-level composition skills. And it is in this latter area that tape-grading seems to me to be especially valuable. One can better understand a complex technique, such as paragraph unity and coherent support of a thesis statement, by hearing it discussed on tape than by seeing a red pencil abbreviation symbol.

A second kind of result is the response of the students themselves. Two samples were obtained, both from the second semester research. Some of the more significant reactions included:

Question 1. WHAT VALUE(S) DO YOU FIND IN TAPE-GRADING? "Easier understanding of mistakes made in theme writing." "A better insight as to how I could improve my writing." "Like a personal interview." "Gained more knowledge about theme writing." "The closer teacher-student relationship developed through hearing my writing discussed let me know that you were trying to do more than find mistakes in (my) writing." "There is closeness – almost as if the teacher called you in personally to correct errors – in tape-grading. You also know exactly why you made the mistake you did." "Tape-grading is one of the best aids in theme writing. I find it's more personalized correction than marks on a paper." "It seemed that the teacher was taking a special interest in me." "It makes the course more interesting and much more personal."

Question 2. IN WHAT COMPOSITION AREAS DID TAPE-GRADING HELP YOU? "Sentencing, since I could find out not only that a sentence was wrong, but also why and how to correct it." "Mechanics and thesis statements." "Helped the most in paragraphing." "Paragraphing and development, since these concepts can't be put into mechanical rules." "Paragraphing, especially coherence devices." "All areas."

Question 3. WHAT WAS THE MAJOR WEAKNESS? The most common weakness mentioned was the necessity of going to the library to use the playback machine. Others included the disadvantages of not being able to look at the paper and see mistakes immediately and the disadvantage of the student's becoming "too critical of himself." But nearly half the students found no major weaknesses at all.

Question 4. WHAT ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT CONTRASTS BETWEEN TAPE-GRADING AND CONVENTIONAL GRADING? "Better understanding." "Can explain in detail." "Can give encouragement when due." "Superior in every way." "Know more precisely what the teacher expects." "More opportunity to give examples of corrections with tape." "Makes errors more outstanding and memorable." "Like having an instructor with you." "More personal concern." "A better media to express the teacher's feelings." (All these comments refer to tape-grading.)

Question 5. HOW GOOD A WRITER DO YOU FEEL YOU ARE NOW, AS COMPARED WITH WHAT YOU FELT AT THE BEGINNING OF THE SEMESTER? Two students said they were not much better because of their own lack of effort, but all the rest felt they had improved from "somewhat" to "greatly." The one most impressive response is quoted in full: "I feel that I am a much better writer now than at the beginning of the semester because I realize that good writing is hard work and that the words do not have to flow rapidly from the pen to have good writing."

Question 6. IN REFERENCE TO ABOVE, HOW MUCH OF THE CREDIT SHOULD TAPE-GRADING RECEIVE? The two students who saw little improvement were specific in blaming themselves rather than tape-grading (or the teacher!). The rest found tape-grading responsible for their improvement ranging from "partially" to "biggest single factor."

Question 7. WHAT IS YOUR HONEST ATTITUDE TOWARD TAPE-GRADING? "Has a future." "Tremendous aid." "Far better than the old system." "Looked forward to listening to tape." "More effective." "I like it." (8 students) "It's great!" "Should be more widely used." "Advancement in the right direction." "It's very good." "A wonderful idea."

Question 8. HOW DETERMINED WERE YOU TO DO WELL IN THE

COURSE? On the negative side – "Not all out." "Wasn't determined in any course." "C or B." "Just enough to get by on." "C grade." On the positive side–"As determined as they come." "Do as well as I possibly could." "Wanted to do well." "Wanted very much to get good grades." "Quite determined." (3 students) "Pretty determined." "Determined to do my hardness." (sic) "I was determined." "Very determined." "Damn determined."

Question 9. DID TAPE-GRADING AFFECT THIS DETERMINATION? Three of the five with more-or-less negative determination felt that tape-grading had not changed their attitude, but the other two felt that tape-grading had increased their determination. Four of the fourteen with positive determination felt that tape-grading had not changed their determination, but the other ten felt that tape-grading increased the determination they already had.

Question 10. WOULD YOU WANT TO BE TAPE-GRADED IN ANOTHER COMPOSITION COURSE? All students replied in the affirmative. Their reasons include: "Gives praise when deserved." "Better chance for improvement." "More personal contact." "Better understanding of what teacher expects." "Help nail down errors specifically." "I enjoy it."

Question 11. FURTHER COMMENTS? Many omitted this one; those who replied are quoted in full: "I feel tape-grading was a great asset to my English grade." "I didn't really want to be part of this experiment, but now I'm glad that I was picked." "I learned much more this semester than last semester." (Says a "D" repeater) "Take the criticism slower." "Keep tape-grading because a student really gains from it." "Because of individual characteristics and personalities of teachers, I think that tape-grading would not be effective in instances." (A valid and perceptive comment – no system can work without a reasonably competent instructor behind it.)

The answers chosen on the guided response questionnaire echo the affirmative point of view in the unguided. All in all, student reaction was definitely on the side of tape-grading. And whether it works because students like it, or whether students like it because it works, is hardly worthy of debate.

Since tape-grading is effective, as both academic achievement and student responses indicate, *why* is it effective? The causes are complex, for the process of writing good prose is notoriously complex. So it is at the risk of oversimplification that I suggest the following reasons for the superiority of tape-grading over conventional grading: (1) it is more positive; (2) it is more personal.

Let's examine each in order. The conventional grader is often lured into believing that he has completed a paper when it is crammed with red rule numbers and abbreviations. These red marks are almost by nature entirely negative, a series of no's. But the tape-grader, perhaps because he's communicating more directly with his student, will not be so negative, i.e., will not say, "That's wrong, and that's bad, and I don't like that." Not only will he point out a weakness or error, but he also will point out *why* it is an error. And he can easily emphasize, not the

commission of the error, but the correction of the error, the positive side. Since he can say about six times as much in a minute as he can write in the same time, he has not only the urge but also the opportunity to be positive.

Second, tape-grading is more personal than conventional grading. Ideally, a teacher should have the time to confer with each student on a theme. But the deluge of students in nearly every teacher's class makes this ideal completely impossible. Tape-grading, however, offers the teacher the opportunity to approach this ideal.

So, tape-grading is more personal, but why should grading be personal to be effective? English teachers cannot afford to forget that writing is a difficult task and that many students are repulsed by the seeming futility of mastering good prose. In order to convince them that it's not "me against the teacher, and he's got the gradebook" but that "it's the teacher and me against my weak writing," a personal approach is necessary. Without this feeling that the teacher is united with him, the student naturally develops, consciously or subconsciously, an antagonism toward the instructor and toward the whole writing process.

But the discovery that the instructor is personally interested in and involved with his writing improvement can lead to the actively receptive attitude vital to writing skill. And his discovery is obviously facilitated by the "I'm talking to you—Frank Jones. I am interested in what your weaknesses are and how we can eliminate them" approach to tape-grading.

Tape-grading helps the instructor explain a mistake clearly enough and emphasize it strongly enough that a student is less likely to make the same mistake twice through either ignorance or carelessness; tape-grading avoids symbols and abbreviations which are too often meaningful only to the instructor; corrections and suggestions made on tape, because of their personal quality, are likely to be meaningful to the student; and tape-grading encourages the instructor to do more than simply correct mechanical errors. Therefore, the practice of using a tape recorder in grading freshman themes promises to reduce the misgivings of the composition instructor.

III.

Curriculum Revision

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WHAT HAPPENED IN HEMET, CALIFORNIA

When a Board of Education decides to help its English teachers, it can do much to remove what James Squire, Executive Secretary of the National Council of Teachers of English, calls the major barrier to improving English instruction, that is, "the lack of cooperation and good will between those who bear various kinds of responsibility for improving the teaching of English." What happened in Hemet, California, illustrates this point.

At one of its meetings last year the Hemet School District Board of Education asked, "What can we do to inaugurate a better English program in the Hemet School District?" The question was put to Oscar Blum, the curriculum supervisor for the school district. Mr. Blum responded by meeting with members of the English departments at the high school and junior high school and with faculties of the elementary schools. He went to the principals of the schools to hear their recommendations. At a general meeting of all those in the district concerned with teaching English, Mr. Blum made a brief report of conditions as they existed and presented some suggestions made at his individual consultations. He then invited comments from the group as to what steps should be taken and their order of importance. From a summary of his investigations Mr. Blum returned a report to the Board of Education on March 2, 1964, listing six major areas in which the teaching of English could be strengthened and improved: hiring new teachers, teaching assignments, class load, selection of materials and equipment, programs for students with different abilities, and inservice training for teachers. The report was concerned primarily with junior and senior high levels. Action from the Board of Education followed immediately, and the program for the improvement of the English teaching in Hemet schools was underway.

Hiring new English teachers was the immediate concern as there

were at least three openings in the high school at this time. "Selection of these teachers is one of our most important responsibilities," Mr. Blum stated. "We should select teachers who have a major in English and who are well trained in the techniques and methods of teaching English at the level to which they are to be assigned." It was further suggested that possible recruitment from outside of the state would be found necessary to find qualified teachers. The board authorized an extensive recruiting trip for finding the teachers who would best meet requirements.

Two other problems, both closely aligned with teacher employment, concerned teaching assignments and class loads. The responsibility for scheduling teachers was left with the principals of the schools with the understanding that the teaching assignments would be entirely within the English department. At the high school, the 1964-65 schedule was carefully planned with only one teacher receiving a class assignment outside of the English field. Only one teacher had an assignment which involved more than two basic preparations within the department. Each teacher was assigned five class sections. The recommendation for a maximum ratio of twenty-five students to one teacher was followed in the preregistration planning. Unfortunately increased registration brought the load to a teacher average of twenty-seven per class. The recommendation for a four class teaching load, based on recommendations of the National Council of Teachers of English, has not been followed but it is hoped that the Board will act favorably on this recommendation in the future.

The final three areas of concern for the Board of Education (the selection of materials and equipment, the arrangement of programs for students with different abilities, and inservice training for teachers) involved not only administrators but also the entire high school English department. Because much of the material in use was obsolete, it was felt that new texts had to be acquired and new curriculum material developed so that allowance for ability grouping and articulation could be made. Members of the English department and administrative staff established this as one of their primary aims and have begun to work together toward its accomplishment.

Some of the progress being made in the arrangement of programs and the selection of materials for students with different abilities involves the use of paperback libraries in two classrooms so that students may more easily obtain books which are suitable to their needs and interests. Such books as Steinbeck's *The Pearl* are being made available for twelfth grade terminal students as well as ninth or tenth grade accelerated students. The adoption of paperback selections is lessening the rigidity of the

program formerly brought about by the use of old anthologies and is helping to broaden pupils' reading interests and experience. Newer and more suitable anthologies are being adopted to meet other students' reading abilities and interests. In addition, a new composition series is being tried which, it is hoped, will help to develop the writing ability of the college prep students and will also assist all students to read better and appreciate good writing.

The inservice training program, which the Board knew depended on the interest and cooperation of the teachers, was launched only after the teachers had expressed their needs and recommended a program that would benefit them. General consent seemed to be directed toward a workshop which would be directed by someone who specialized in methods of teaching English. The Board of Education agreed to pay for one half the expense that might be incurred and sought the support for the other half from the Riverside County School Board which was more than willing to support such a worthwhile project. Dr. Lyle Siverson, Assistant Superintendent of Instruction for the Riverside County Schools Office, offered to coordinate this joint Board effort. As soon as this financial support was assured, a committee, consisting of English department chairmen, a member of the high school and the junior high school English department, and the curriculum supervisor, was appointed to find the person or consultant to do the job. After considering various people, Dr. Richard M. Bossone of the University of California at Riverside was selected. When he agreed to direct the inservice training program, he made one stipulation: the Board must agree to grant teachers released time from class (at least one hour for the two hour weekly workshop session). The Board agreed and the inservice training program got underway.

The inservice training program consisted of twelve meetings, one afternoon a week for two hours. The major topics discussed were methods of motivating students to study English, with emphasis upon the function and power of language; the teaching of reading skills; methods of teaching grammar, with emphasis upon generative grammar; the teaching of composition, with emphasis upon expository writing; and methods of teaching literature. In addition to these major topics, such things as the teaching of spelling and vocabulary development, writing essay exams and book reviews, and teaching speaking and listening skills were discussed. The meetings stimulated not only great discussion within the department, but also great desire to improve and in some instances to change individual methods of teaching English. In addition to this, the English teachers became more desirous of experimenting with new

materials and teaching aids and more receptive to continual evaluation of their program.

Because the Board was pleased with the results of the inservice training program and because they realize the importance of their role in encouraging professional growth of their teachers, they have agreed to act on two other recommendations: to encourage English teachers to attend professional meetings and conferences pertaining to the teaching of English and to pay for their expenses which might be incurred by attending these meetings; and second, to urge teachers to join the local, state, and national organizations dedicated to the improvement of English instruction.

The Board's program to inaugurate better English teaching at Hemet has had a decided effect upon the English teachers in the district and, in particular, upon the members of the English department in the high school. First of all, the English teachers have come to realize their work is important, respected, and the concern of all who profess an interest in education; they are no longer treated as if their job could be done by anyone else regardless of training or background. Second, they are being consulted about their needs and problems. Third, they are being given financial support for their English program and for their professional growth. And finally, they feel a certain pride in having been a part of a situation which can serve as an inspiration or example of cooperation between various groups and individuals responsible for improving the teaching of English.

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LINGUISTICS IN TEXAS HIGH SCHOOLS

An introductory course in linguistics for Texas secondary English teachers uses one hundred language transparencies designed for high school English students—the Texas Education Agency's way of developing know-how for curriculum change.

The transparency making came first, and suggested the statewide inservice course. Under a grant from the U. S. Office of Education, a blue-ribbon group of five English specialists from schools and colleges worked during 1963-64 to design visuals for language study in junior and senior high school English.

The designers carefully surveyed the state-adopted texts in use in Texas, examined the findings of national curriculum studies, and considered national trends. They decided to use linguistics content with an inductive approach. They developed a series of fifty visuals to teach the nature of language, parts of speech, sentence patterns, and transformations. Additional series were designed for introducing students to intonation, and for study of usage, including regional and social variations. A short series on history traced Indo-European to modern European languages in time, geography, and kinship. Two short series of visuals were designed to help students understand some English spelling patterns.

Color and design were used to stimulate interest and to carry meaning. Overlays provided the means for building language generalizations inductively.

Each visual design was carefully studied by all members of the design team and by the English consultants at the Texas Education Agency. The design was then turned over to the art and technical section of the Division of Instructional Media, where the design was transposed into a completed master. Following check and proofing, five copies of each transparency were reproduced for classroom test. Five groups of teachers and students in English classrooms used the visuals and evaluated them for content and effectiveness. The staff consultants, working with the designing committee, made final modification.

Because the visuals used content unfamiliar to many teachers, the designing committee wrote background and directions for their use.

The finished project will be ready for limited distribution by September 1965. The "package" is a masterbook from which a local school will produce multicolor visuals with overlays. The masterbook also includes editorial comments on each visual, a bibliography for teachers and students, and a sample unit on dialect for the 11th grade. Because the transparencies supplement the course in the local school and do not in themselves constitute a course, the unit serves to illustrate just how the visuals, along with texts, dictionaries, and other resources, may be used in a classroom study.

But one hundred visuals using somewhat unfamiliar subject matter needed to be planted in fertile ground. Here was a valuable resource for the English classroom; teachers needed to know about them.

An inservice course was one avenue for introducing teachers to the field of linguistics and to the linguistically-based visuals.

The State Board of Education authorized the development of such a course, to be offered in centers across the state in the fall of 1964. An 18-clock-hour introductory course in linguistics was developed by the staff and Dr. Rudolph C. Troike, linguist at the University of Texas. Instructors in each center were provided with a three-hundred page syllabus and other teaching materials including a set of the language transparencies.

The course, usually taught in nine two-hour classes, introduces these topics: Linguistics and the Nature of Language, The History of the English Language, Phonology and Reading, American Dialects, New Concepts of Grammar, Morphology, Syntax, Transformations, and Lexicography.

Lectures, films, tapes, and the English language transparencies provide balanced instruction. Each participant receives a 110 page Study Guide written by the state consultants in English. The guide summarizes each lesson, suggests reading assignments, and makes numerous applications appropriate for secondary English classes.

During the school year, 1964-65, eighteen classes have been taught under the sponsorship of the Texas Education Agency and have enrolled 1,600 teachers. In addition to these classes, several school districts have used the materials and provided their own instructor, or obtained an instructor from a nearby college, to handle classes. It is estimated that abut 500 teachers have been enrolled in district-sponsored classes.

The number of classes has been limited because qualified teachers are not available. The first group of instructors included classroom teachers, city supervisors of English, and college English professors. CEEB Institute-trained teachers formed a strong resource. Before the first

classes began, the Agency brought together twelve future instructors for a week-long workshop conducted by Dr. Troike. Since the workshop, several additional instructors from colleges and universities have been added; each comes to Austin for a short orientation before classwork begins.

Materials for the course and honorariums for the instructors are provided by the agency. Other costs, if any, are borne by the school in which the class is offered. For example, custodial services, audiovisual equipment, and operators are provided by the host school. Registration and roll checking are handled by a school official. In a class of one hundred teachers, about sixty are usually from the host district, but as many as thirty districts are represented in some classes, though instructors prefer classes of fifty to sixty teachers.

Participants in all classes are given opportunities to evaluate the course, both informally and formally. In early classes, two criticisms, were of major importance: too much time spent on topics already familiar to the teachers and too little time spent on applying the theory to the secondary classroom. On the basis of these evaluations the course has been revised and the instructors encouraged to plan a demonstration lesson and to relate theory to practice frequently. Teachers examine sample sets of textbooks designed for secondary classrooms and evaluate the materials in terms of linguistic concepts. They are given suggestions for adapting current text materials.

Interest has been high. There have been many more requests for enrollment than the eighteen centers could comfortably handle. A by-product of the inservice program has increased interest among college faculties in offering courses, on campus and off, in modern language study for secondary school teachers.

The materials for the course will not remain idle during the summer. Eleven NDEA Institutes in Texas will have the transparencies and the study guide for the four hundred teachers enrolled. The staff member who teaches language may use the syllabus designed for the Agency course.[1]

In addition to summer institutes in Texas, some school systems will incorporate the inservice course into summer workshops. One college in an area not reached by the centers in operation plans to offer the non-credit inservice course as a service to teachers in its area.

[1] One NDEA Institute in Texas, devoted to linguistics, will enroll teachers whose superintendents have recommended them as leaders who can be used in training others in their home districts.

The Texas Education Agency gives certificates of attendance to those teachers who complete the course. School districts usually file the certificate with other credentials of the teacher, and frequently count the class toward fulfilment of local inservice requirements.

The State Board of Education will be asked to continue the course as long as teachers show interest, but only in centers where competent instructors are available.

Success of the secondary course has stimulated the development of a course for elementary teachers. A linguist whose experience includes work in elementary curriculum will work with the English staff in the summer of 1965 in adapting the present course with even greater emphasis upon application of theory to the teaching of reading oral and written language for elementary grades.

IV.

Classroom Practices in Detail

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VOCABUILDERS

The most interesting part of my practice is how it evolved from an idea into actuality with student cooperation. Experience in teaching language arts at the junior high level had convinced me that children at this age learn more in a contest or game situation. I had employed this technique in the teaching of spelling, vocabulary lists, and even grammar. Competition can become quite keen during a diagraming contest at the blackboard!

One area in which I had not used this technique was in vocabulary growth through an understanding of word construction. This would involve some exercise using the component parts of words including prefixes, suffices, and roots. Past experience with the memorization of long lists of prefixes and suffixes together with their meanings had proved ineffective and frustrating to students and teacher alike.

During the next two years I shall be teaching the same "core" of three classes grouped according to ability. Because they are also my homeroom class, I see the members of the highest group two periods more per week than the middle and lowest groups. We have sufficient time to share experiences, voice opinions, and solve problems.

Realizing this was a rare opportunity to develop my idea with help from these bright, enthusiastic students, I shared my few sketchy thoughts with them. We would begin by cutting rectangular strips of paper. On these strips the class would print components of words in lettering large enough to be read from anywhere in the room. Later these would be distributed randomly throughout the class. The first student chosen to go to the front of the room with his paper would be joined by classmates to build words.

After this brief sketch the class eagerly offered suggestions. Together we resolved that each student should receive a prefix or a suffix which he would print on a strip of paper. Whatever roots he could find to combine with it he was to print on separate papers, one paper for each root.

The next day with dictionaries on their desks, the members of the

class set to work. It soon became evident that there were artistic masterpieces being created throughout the room with bright colored paper and painted lettering. This proved to be our first mistake which we discovered when the big day arrived to begin our game. When the papers were distributed, no knowledge of spelling or vocabulary was needed to put together the components of each young artist. They were easily identified by similarity in color or paper for prefixes, and white paper for roots. This was a way of identifying each one quickly during the game.

Our second error was in allowing each boy and girl to make an unlimited number of roots for his or her prefix or suffix. The room was swamped with root components. After a discussion of the problem, the class decided that two roots per suffix or prefix would be sufficient.

Again the class set to work. The next day we were able to test the revised "Vocabuilders," the name we had agreed to call the activity. The period passed quickly as the students formed the yellow, white, and pink words. As I watched the activity, there was time for reevaluation of the purpose of the project. Certainly it would be useful for spelling and vocabulary building. Was this enough for these inquisitive, alert youngsters? Why shouldn't we include derivations of the roots together with meanings for the other parts?

The class responded to this question with the now familiar rush for dictionaries. Now our "Vocabuilders" were to have the derivation and meaning on the back of each. Thus the students who held a completed word before the class could explain its origin and construction as related to its modern meaning.

While working on this part of the project, some students discovered that there were words in our language beginning with the same letters of their prefix in which the letters were not functioning as a prefix but as part of the entire word. One boy unhappily found that *al* in *alfalfa* was not a prefix since the word was derived from Spanish *alfalfez*. Not knowing Greek, he was again frustrated when he tried to use *alphabet*. At least from this experience he learned the first two letters of the Greek alphabet. What had begun as an easy assignment proved to be a challenge.

It was quite a revelation to observe the effect of the Space Age on this well-informed group. The student who was assigned *tele* as his prefix produced the words *teleprompter* and *tel-star* instead of the anticipated *telephone* and *telegraph*. A class discussion of coined words and modern usage ensued, leading to a consideration of how languages grow and change. Likewise *thermo* produced interesting results. Instead of

such familiar words as *thermometer* and *thermos bottle*, one youngster, who obviously knew more about such things than this teacher, proposed *thermonuclear* and *thermodynamics*.

Finally the time came to utilize the results of all this effort. The students distributed one prefix, one suffix, and four roots to everyone in the class. Incidentally, the teacher's suffix contribution to the project was *ly* for the adverb-minded. This "Vocabuilder" shortly became the favorite one to receive in the distribution because of the many possibilities of using it.

The first class period with "Vocabuilders" began. The first student displayed *duce* as his root. There was a frantic waving of hands. *Pro* was chosen to come forward, followed quickly by *tion*. (Dropping a final silent *e* was permitted.)

A discussion of the completed word followed in this manner. "What is the derivation of the root? What are the meanings of the other parts?" "What is the meaning of the word?" "Use it in a sentence." "What part of speech is it in your sentence?" "Can it be used as any other part of speech?" "Illustrate with a sentence."

As the first students returned to their seats, more hands were waving. What is wrong with *re, de, con, in, tive? Duce* returned to the front of the room, but before we could resume, the bell rang. The period had raced by.

We found a use for the colorful masterpieces from our initial mistake of nonconformity in paper and printing. Across the entire back of the room is a large bulletin board. The class members covered it completely with the papers; prefixes on the left, roots in the middle, suffixes on the right. Facing the board, with dictionaries for reference, the students tried to see who could get the longest list of words. One succeeded in finding ninety!

The next day we used the contest technique with the bulletin board display. Utilizing their lists from the previous day, the boys and girls in turn spelled a word. For the first round each correct word received a point for the team. On the second round, however, we decided pupils should be rewarded for finding more complex words by assigning one point for each component part used. Thus, *ex press ion* won three points. With dictionaries as proof, any contestant could challenge the spelling or existence of the opposing team's word. When these errors occurred we deducted the point value of the proposed word. The attempt to use *intercustomary* was challenged and penalized. The greatest experience for the students was finding that *antidisestablishmentarianism* was on our bulletin board just by chance!

A variation of the "Vocabuilders" came from an idea that a member of my homeroom class suggested. It was a charade game with each student building a word and then acting it out before the class. Again we used the contest technique.

The roots on the bulletin board were changed every week by the students, alternating between the higher and middle groups. They also replaced the prefixes and suffixes with new ones as the need arose.

The response to using the "Vocabuilders" varied among the three classes. The higher group enjoyed all the activities and constantly looked for new variations. The middle group showed slightly less enthusiasm especially in the discussion of derivations and meanings of the parts. With the lower group only the simple spelling game from the bulletin board aroused any interest and this only for short periods of time.

At last what had begun as a vague idea was now an actuality. The students in my homeroom class obviously enjoyed their part in its development and are still looking for new ways to use it. As the teacher, I would like to think that next year with eighth graders we will find other valuable uses for "Vocabuilders."

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POINT OF VIEW: A UNIT ON JOHN BROWN'S BODY

An English teacher is pleased when any composition lesson is successful. When the lesson also contributes to the students' understanding of a concept important to the interpretation and appreciation of literature, the teacher is doubly pleased. The composition-literature lesson presented here proved meaningful to the students and contributed to their understanding of point of view as an aid to the study of the epic poem *John Brown's Body;* at the same time, the class gained insight into the use of point of view as it is experienced by the writer.

Junior English students at Riverside-Brookfield High School who feel that they do not care for the study of poetry are often surprised to find that Stephen Vincent Benét's epic poem *John Brown's Body* is an enjoyable literary experience. The poem does, however, present certain problems which interfere with the students' understanding and appreciation. One of these problems arises because of constantly shifting points of view. Since the author shifts frequently and without warning (as many as three times on one page!), the student should understand the concept of point of view thoroughly if he is to gain the maximum benefit from the study of the poem.

Earlier in the year, the students had worked with the problem of understanding point of view in literature, most notably in *Moby Dick* and *The Red Badge of Courage;* however, these works hardly prepared them for the frequent shifts employed in Benét's epic. Therefore the immediate goal of the short unit described on the following pages was to increase the awareness of and understanding of point of view as used by Benét in *John Brown's Body* and to help the students see how a writer may adopt the point of view of someone other than himself in a written composition.

The class had read and discussed the first five of the eight books of the epic before they began the unit on point of view. A part of each period would be devoted to the unit on point of view and for the rest of each period the class would continue their reading and discussion of the

epic. However, on the regular weekly composition day, Friday, the entire period was to be devoted to writing.

On Monday, the first day of the unit, at the beginning of the period, the teacher told the class that to help them with their reading of the epic and to prepare them for a related composition assignment on the following Friday, we would spend part of the class time during the week discussing point of view.

The teacher asked each member of the class to write down his definition of point of view. Since the class had never been given a formal definition to memorize, they produced a variety of definitions. These were discussed, and one definition (*Point of view* is the standpoint from which the writer writes his material and the standpoint from which the reader must view the writer's material if he is to interpret the writer properly.) was chosen as the most useful.

The teacher then provoked a short class discussion in which the class considered others besides writers and readers who should be familiar with point of view. The class decided that actors, salesmen, interior decorators, advertising people, etc. must be skilled in looking at their work from the viewpoint of other people if they are to be effective and successful in their work.

On Tuesday, the second day, the definition of point of view that had been decided upon was written on the chalkboard. The class was asked to explain and/or to give specific examples of just what the word "*standpoint*" meant in their definition. As expected, no one produced a simple, all encompassing explanation of the word and since a variety of individual aspects that affect an individual's point of view had been touched upon, the class was told that they would cooperatively compose and list on the board a group of "Factors That Affect a Person's Point of View." The teacher would not contribute to the list but would write on the board any and all factors that the students suggested.

After all suggestions had been recorded, the teacher asked if there were any factors that the students would like to eliminate or combine with others. After this had been done, they were told to copy the list from the board and to bring it to class on the following day. One class decided upon the following list:

1. age
2. sex
3. family background
4. geographic background
5. religious background
6. educational background
7. social group
8. intelligence
9. abilities
10. personality

11. goals
12. subconscious desires
13. beliefs
14. physical condition
15. physical surroundings
16. emotional surroundings
17. prejudices

On Wednesday, the third day, the class was informed on Friday they would be writing compositions in which they would adopt the point of view of a fictional character from *John Brown's Body*. To help them to write their compositions, they could use the list of factors that affect a person's point of view that had been prepared on the previous day.

The writing assignment itself would take the form of a letter from one of the fictional characters in the epic to another fictional character in the epic. The letter was to be one that actually might have been written; that is, the letter was to be consistent with the characters and events as presented by Benét in the epic. The class was then asked to suggest situations in the epic that might reasonably call for one of the characters to write to another. A few of the situations were written down to serve as aids in selecting their own situations. One class offered the following suggestions:

1. Melora Vilas would write to Jack Ellyat to tell him that she was pregnant.
2. Jack Ellyat would write to Melora Vilas to tell her that he had been recaptured and could not return to her.
3. Jack Ellyat would write to his father to ask him to write his congressman to secure Jack's transfer from the Army of the Tennessee to the Army of the Potomac.
4. Clay Wingate would write to Sally Dupré to tell her that he regretted not getting to talk to her at the time the Black Horse Troop returned to war from their leaves.
5. Mary Lou Wingate would write to Clay Wingate to tell him not to worry about the plantation even though hard times had fallen over the house.

The above were only examples and the students were free to choose their own characters and situations.

At this point the teacher stressed that the emphasis of the assignment in composition was to be upon gaining experience in the use of point of view. The letter writing was a device to make their first experience with adopting another's point of view easier. Those who felt insecure about letter writing were referred to their grammar and composition handbooks.

To make the writing job easier, each student was asked to prepare a profile of the character from whose point of view he intended to write his letter. The profile was based on the list of factors affecting point of view, which had been previously prepared. They were to prepare the profiles for criticism in class the next day. The class was told that although the profiles were to be considered an aid to be used in writing the compositions on Friday, they should prepare them carefully if they were to be useful.

On Thursday, the fourth day, several of the profiles were presented to the class and criticized. After the discussion many of the students expressed a desire to improve their profiles and, since the profiles would be helpful in preparing for Friday's composition assignment, the students were allowed to keep them.

The specific assignment for Friday was then made. Each student was to bring to class his improved profile and whatever materials he felt would be of service in writing his composition. The minimum preparation would include the following items:

1. the name of the writer of the letter
2. the name of the person to whom the letter would be written
3. the situation from which the letter would be written
4. the specific purpose for which the letter would be written
5. at least five major points of information to be used in fulfilling the purpose of the letter.

They were to bring these items to class on Friday so the teacher could inspect them for obvious flaws before the students wrote their compositions.

The teacher instigated a discussion of the problems involved in writing a letter from the point of view of another person by having students with acting experience compare the problems posed by the composition assignment with those posed by interpreting a role in a play. As one student expressed the problem, "The real challenge is to quit being yourself and get inside the character."

The class was then asked if there were any particular difficulties that they could foresee. One student asked if he would be penalized if he used the word *ain't*. After a brief discussion, it was decided that if the letter writer would use the word *ain't* or make any other grammar, spelling, or punctuation mistake, it would be proper for the student to represent the mistake. Another student asked about the words *damn* and *hell*. Since such words appear in *John Brown's Body*, it was decided that if the words suited the character and the situation, they would be permitted.

Another student wanted to know how the papers were to be graded since he could not be penalized for a mistake made by the character he was representing. Since this seemed to be a legitimate question, the teacher told the class that he would base the grade primarily on the following factors:

1. how well the student interpreted the character
2. how well the student chose in selecting a situation
3. how well the student succeeded in writing a letter that Benét really might have included in *John Brown's Body*.

On Friday, the fifth day, the compositions were written in class. At the beginning of the period, the teacher briefly examined each student's plan to make sure that there were no obvious flaws in his design.

On Monday, the sixth day, several of the letters were presented in class. The names of the letter writer and the person to whom the letter was written were not revealed. As soon as a student was sure that he knew both the name of the writer and the name of the person written to, he would raise his hand. The period ended before all of the letters could be read and since the class seemed to enjoy the "game," the rest of the letters were read on the next day.

At this point the unit was supposed to end; however, since many of the students asked if they could repeat the assignment, the teacher gave another assignment for the composition for the following Friday. This time the students were to record the reactions of Jack Ellyat, who would represent the southern point of view, and Clay Wingate, who would represent the northern point of view, to the same event. The event would have to be of an historical nature since the fictional aspects of the epic did not touch both of them.

There were disadvantages to this brief unit in point of view. The chief one was that the unit consumed a great deal of time. Although the teacher planned to devote only one half of each period for five days and the entire period for one day, he found that the unit filled almost the entire time for seven days and led to another related assignment in point of view which he had not planned.

Another disadvantage might be that the students were allowed to use poor grammar and profanity in their compositions. For some reason they leaped at the chance. Perhaps they saw this as an opportunity to express something about their reaction to English teaching!

Despite these disadvantages, there were certainly many advantages that made the unit worthwhile. For one thing, the students seemed to

enjoy this assignment more than any other composition assignment that they had done.

The students gained experience in writing from the point of view of someone other than themselves. They gained some understanding and appreciation of the problems that writers encounter in adopting another's point of view.

The students also gained from the reading of the letters in class; trying to recognize the writer of the letter gave them experience in being alert to and recognizing clues indicating point of view. Although one can only guess, it seems that the interpretative skills of the students had been sharpened.

The teacher also gained from the unit. For one thing he learned that a composition assignment will not be met with the usual groans if he prepares the class carefully for the assignment.

He learned that a unit can be meaningful to the students from the standpoint of improving their composition skills and at the same time lead to improvement in the skills necessary for the interpretation and appreciation of the literature that they are reading.

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PRESENT IMPERFECT

The girls know the latest hairdos before the ink dries on the fashion magazines. The boys can tell you the compression of every car that's won the 500 in the past decade.

Recognize them? They're the slow learners, or potential dropouts, or terminal students—or whatever name they're currently going by in academic circles.

Some are poor readers, few know the difference between an adjective and an adverb, most are poor spellers. But they have two other characteristics in common:

1) They live in the here and now.
2) They hate English.

In fact, most of them dislike school, and there almost invariably exists a constant tension between them and their classroom teachers. Facing fact number two brought me last year to a thorough consideration of whether fact number one could in any way be utilized to overcome their antipathy towards English as their generally "unfavorite" subject (why do we have to study *that* again, as they frequently put it).

It struck me that there is one medium of communication that concentrates on the "here and now" that monopolizes their attention:

The daily press!

Classroom teachers have, of course, used newspapers as instructional material for years; I offer only a few approaches that might not have been considered in the context of "reaching" the below-average English student.

Nor do I claim that by using newspapers as almost my sole "textbook" have I been able to convert this traditionally apathetic group into thirsty seekers of knowledge. However, as I have had more success with this method than with any other I have tried with low ability students, it occurs to me that other teachers of similar groups might be able to adapt my plans for their own use.

Newspapers afford a three-fold advantage over more conventional teaching materials for these students:

1. Freshness: these are youngsters whose concerns center on *today*, and a changing dateline on each day's lesson material is a definite plus.
2. Variety: news, features, photographs, advertising, headlines, columns, and special departments all offer many avenues of approach to dealing with the many facets of communication.
3. Brevity: attention spans of these students are notoriously short—and so is most newspaper copy.

These same advantages carry unique problems too, but through experience I have learned how to cope with these fairly well. For example, the sheer bulk of the material required entails storage and disposal (my classes are the prime source of "litter" for the biology department's collection of small animals). Each student writes his name across the front page of his newspaper and these are stored in room cupboards for as long as that particular issue is needed for study (usually not more than two or three days), and then the old papers are destroyed. If a given lesson requires that a certain section of the paper be kept longer, that section is clipped out and kept in individual manila folders.

It has proved easier to take our subscriptions on a start-and-stop basis than to try to sustain subscriptions over long periods of time. That is, we usually take a newspaper for a one-week period, save certain sections for future use, then resume delivery the following month for a like period of time. There is material aplenty in each day's newspaper to supply lessons for four or five days.

Collecting for the newspapers is another area of minor difficulty. This has proved relatively painless, however, because the circulation manager of the local newspaper we use has been both generous and understanding; we receive a rock-bottom rate for bulk delivery, and we are provided with copies of the newspaper's Sunday edition free of charge for those students who cannot, or do not wish to, pay the small weekly sum involved.

These matters, of course, are secondary to the primary considerations, which are: *what* can you teach via the newspapers, *how* can you teach it, and *why* is the press an effective educational resource.

I have used the newspaper as a springboard for teaching composition, reading, spelling, grammar, history of language, rhetoric, and grammar. Book reviews and best-seller lists have even sometimes introduced my students to "literature."

How one can best formulate specific lesson plans in each area depends both on the content of the newspaper you are using and on the teacher's own favorite methods. Here are a few suggestions culled from my own plan book:

Composition, inasmuch as it encompasses content as well as the entire complex of technical language skills, is perhaps always the most difficult part of the English curriculum to teach—and to learn. With the submedian abilities of slow groups, the difficulties—as in all other areas of the subject—are compounded. These students simply have less to write *about* than do students who read more and generally have wider interests. They cannot handle ideas well; but they *can* handle people and things. Frequent short assignments seem much more sensible than long compositions. I have found that practicing news story "leads," usually from data supplied by headlines, gives them ready-to-hand subject matter and, in addition, keeps written assignments to manageable lengths. Using the journalistic 5 W's (who, what, where, when, why/how), the students find it relatively easy to construct quite complex sentences that are concise and understandable. At the beginning of the semester, we concentrate on reading leads from news stories. I then ask them to pick out and write down, in simple list fashion, each of the W's contained in the lead sentence.

The composition assignments can be any length the teacher desires, but I have found it most successful to have them follow the pattern of news writing by developing each of the W's, one at a time, in succeeding short paragraphs. Frequently I put on the chalk board just the headline from a news story in the current day's paper, then ask them to supply details from their own imagination for a complete lead sentence. For example, one headline I used recently was: "Women Saves Trading Stamps To Swap for Bus."

Before the students began to write, we exchanged ideas on who the "woman" might be, why she needed or wanted a bus, how she planned to get it with trading stamps. Then, armed with plenty of material, most of the students had little trouble concocting an interesting and readable sentence. From this beginning, they continued writing until they had a full-fledged "news story" that would hold a reader's interest.

Headlines written with a professional flair for arousing the curiosity of the newspaper reader usually do the same for the student in the English classroom. Many of them treat the headline as a sort of puzzle to be figured out, and there is high glee if one or more members of the class guess the "real" story (reading of the actual news story is the denouement saved until after the students have completed the writing assignment).

Feature stories are used in a similar way, except that here the writing emphasis is on devising an opening sentence that will "tease" the reader and make him want to go on reading. Here is a feature story lead I used recently, asking the students to write a paragraph to explain the opening sentence:

"The serpent had something to do with it when Eve ate that apple, but so quite probably did the hypothalamus."

Need I explain how I teach vocabulary from the daily newspaper? They may never need to know the name of the "ventral part of the forebrain," but there are many less esoteric words that appear in daily print that can be profitable. I do not get the resistance to vocabulary-building that I used to when I used word lists, or even when my vocabulary work was derived from books read in class. The same students who will complain that nobody uses the unfamiliar words they meet in books, accept the currency of the prose encountered in newspapers. Apparently they have accepted the often-repeated dictum that the newspaper is geared to the average 12-year-old mentality and are unwilling to admit that they cannot master such a vocabulary.

Quite by accident I discovered that detecting a spelling error in a newspaper—which the general public is wont to look upon as something of an authority in the realm of language—gives these students a feeling of delighted superiority and provides the teacher with a marvelous opportunity for expounding the practical advantages of mastering correct spelling. Misspellings in print bother even the poorest spellers, strangely enough.

Etymology and the history of language—if one is careful not to call them by those names—fascinate these students. Many of them apparently have never given a thought to how their native tongue came to be, but seem to have some vague idea that it sprang full-blown from the head of some primordial Zeus—probably an English teacher! We recently spent several days discussing the origins of both language and slanguage after coming across this feature headline: "Why Don't We *all shaddup*." I even managed to slip in a brief account of how dictionaries are compiled. A brisk discussion followed on whether the current teenage meaning of the word "boss" would ever find its way into Webster, or whether it would fall into the linguistic limbo of its predecessor "tough."

But not all of my lessons are so erudite. I mentioned at the beginning of this article that these reluctant students are rooted in the present and tend to be extremely practical. Well, so is the daily press. It is a market place for many commodities and services. So we spend a good deal of time with the classified ad section and with the display ads.

Among assignments I have given my students are:

1. Selecting a "help wanted" ad for which they qualified, then answering that ad with a letter of application.
2. Writing an ad that would persuade a reader to buy their old car, last year's formal, outgrown electric train, or any real or imaginary white elephant.
3. Writing a "situation wanted" ad that would net them a summer or after-school job.
4. Designing a display ad (complete with sketches, if they chose) to sell any commodity, accompanied by a paragraph explaining what appeal they are trying to make to the reader. (This lesson was preceded by a rather thorough analysis of sales techniques employed by ad writers.)
5. Asking them to "spend" an imaginary $100 on the items most appealingly presented in the advertisements in that day's newspaper.
6. Drawing up a family food budget for one week, using the grocery store ads to figure up prices and totals (this despite a few protests that I was supposed to be teaching English, not math; and I refrained from revealing that I was actually trying to get them to discover for themselves the many practical uses of the art of communication).
7. Comparing the techniques of writing display and classified ads. This, designedly, led to consideration of the differences between ready-made audiences for one's writing, and audiences whose attention must first be captured.

We also make much use of the photographs that appear in ample supply in any day's issue of any newspaper. An assignment I use frequently to stimulate the students' imaginations and to exercise their writing skills is showing news photos without the captions and assigning the writing of explanatory captions. This, like the headline assignments, is usually an interest-provoker. It also helps to emphasize the importance of the written language to a group of adolescents accustomed to getting messages from the double-barreled audiovisual impact of TV rather than from the more laborious printed page. Pictures often do *not* tell the whole story, as students discover after trying to decipher a captionless picture.

A newspaper covering their own community can also be a valuable means of acquainting the student with his environment. Many of these students are surprised to learn, via the entertainment page or display ads for cultural events such as concerts, lectures, exhibits, and tours, that

there are other places to go within a 10-mile radius besides the pizza parlor and bowling alley.

One day I had the class draw up itineraries for an imaginary visiting relative from another state. Another assignment was writing a newspaper-length feature story on a local point of interest they personally had visited.

We have studied reviews of books, movies, and plays to discover what the reader wants to know before investing his time or money in these entertainments. A rather livelier method of writing reports of their own out-of-class reading has been a byproduct of this study.

Now we come to the final point: *Why* is the press an effective educational resource? Or is it?

Purists may note that I have not mentioned how I teach grammar from a newspaper. Perhaps it would be more accurate to say that I teach usage, rather than grammar. Frankly, I gave up quite a while ago teaching these students formal grammar. My classes are eleventh and twelfth graders, and if these students still don't know the difference between a noun and a verb after some ten years of underlining the former once and the latter twice—then I agree with them: "Not *that* again!"

These youngsters are doers, not thinkers. And I shall be satisfied if they can *use* nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs. If they can identify them as well, fine. But most of them can't, and I am not convinced that they must. But they *must* be able to use words to give expression to their ideas if they are to live in an articulate society with any feeling of adequacy.

Most news writers have a facility with everyday language which seems to inspire students through imitation. Patently, these writers write to be read. This is a much easier concept to show than to explain to low-ability students.

I leave conjugations, tenses, and all but the most basic nomenclature to the hardier teachers. This is a soaring into the realms of the abstract: the long ago and far away.

Imperfect though it may be, these kids dwell in the present. There is plenty to read about and ponder under the dateline, "Today, Hometown, U.S.A."